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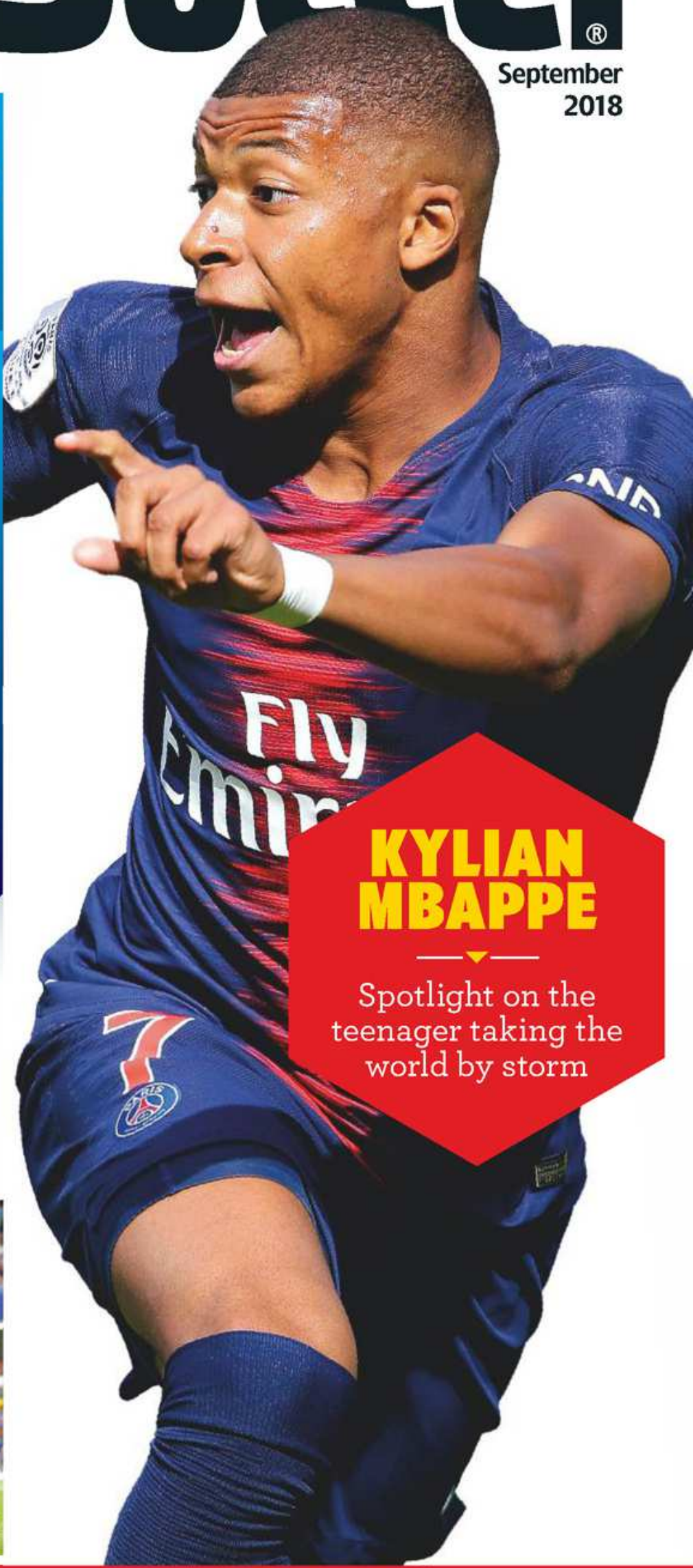

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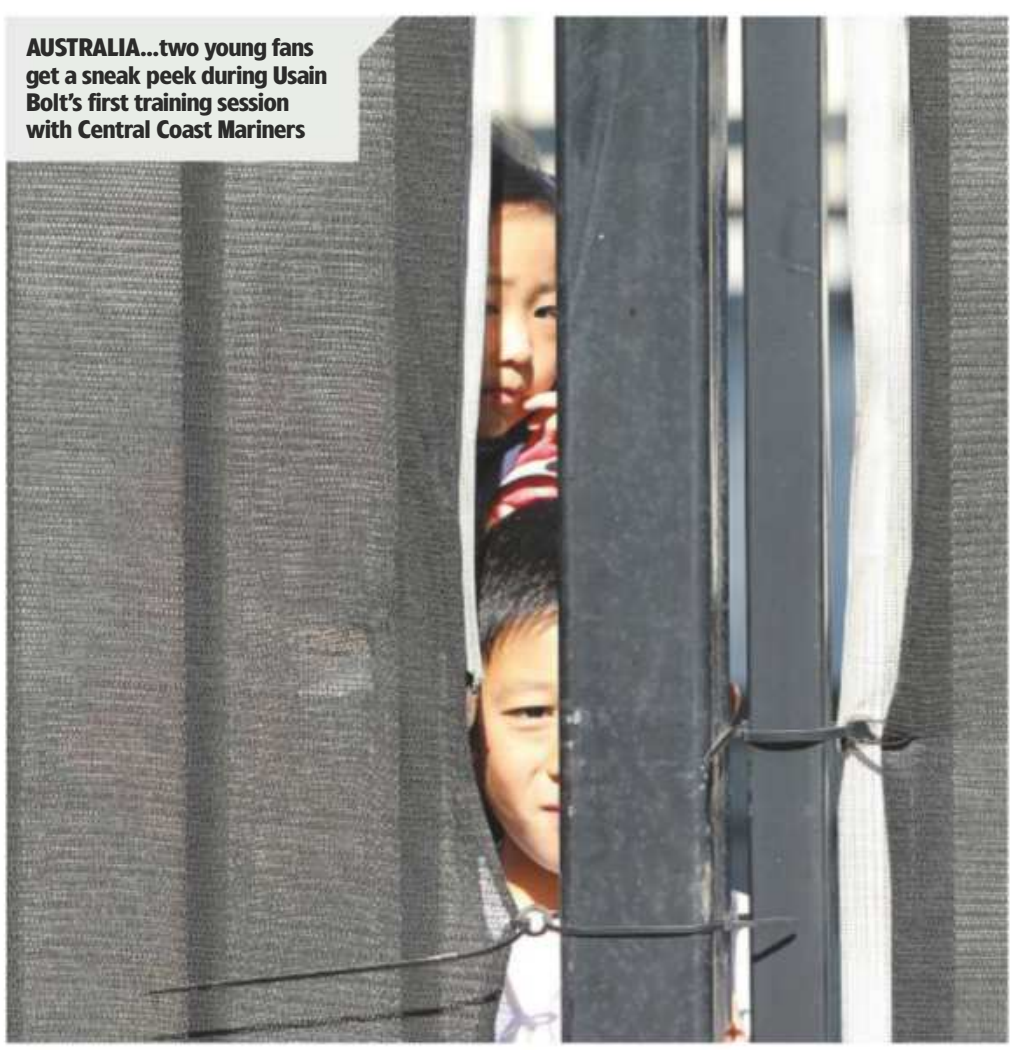
VIETNAM...rain-soaked fans watch the men's Asian Games match between Vietnam and Syria



AUSTRALIA...two young fans get a sneak peek during Usain Bolt's first training session with Central Coast Mariners

DENMARK...Zeca of Copenhagen and his children have fun on the pitch

BRAZIL...a Santos fan is arrested after invading the pitch during the Libertadores Cup game against Independiente

MEXICO... Cruz Azul's Jose Maduena is on the receiving end against Toluca

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FROM THE EDITOR

Another season of European club football and the distortion of the game by money is stronger than ever. While oil-rich Azerbaijan hosts the 2019 Europa League Final, it is hard to envisage a club from outside of the big five leagues celebrating a Champions League victory in Madrid's Metropolitano stadium on June 1 next year. A handful of elite clubs now dominate the European club landscape to such an extent that if a new name is to be added to the pantheon of winners, it is likely to be that of Paris Saint-Germain or Manchester City.

Since Porto won in 2004, nine of the 14 subsequent Champions League Finals have been won by Real Madrid or Barcelona.

This season, changes to the qualifying format mean only 15 different countries are represented among the 32 group-stage teams, compared to 17 in each of the previous three seasons. Clubs from England, France, Germany, Italy and Spain did not have to endure the inconvenience of going through the qualifying rounds. But their dominance of the Champions League raises expectations that the Europa League might provide a stronger competition this year.

We live in hope.

Gavin Hamilton, Editor

Since Porto won in 2004, nine of the 14 Champions League Finals have been won by Real Madrid or Barcelona

10 SIGNIFICANT EVENTS THIS MONTH

1 Champions League draw p42
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8 Germany's 50+1 row intensifies p74
9 Italian women's game hit by row p66
10 Martinez breaks MLS scoring record p17

Unhappy... Lionel Messi (right)

UNITED STATES

Marin and Napout jailed

Jose Maria Marin, the former head of Brazil's football association, and Juan Angel Napout, the former president of CONMEBOL, have been jailed for four and nine years respectively for corruption.

The pair were among seven officials who were arrested following a dawn raid on the official FIFA hotel in Zurich in May 2015.

Marin, 86, was convicted of accepting bribes from sports marketing companies in exchange for contracts to broadcast tournaments such as the Copa America and Libertadores Cup. The former governor of Sao Paulo was also fined $1.2million and ordered to forfeit $3.34m. Last year he was found guilty of six of the seven counts against him, relating to money laundering and wire fraud conspiracy.

Napout, the 60-year-old Paraguayan who led South America's football governing body, was convicted of racketeering conspiracy and two wire-fraud charges.

Peru's Manuel Burga was cleared of taking bribes by a jury in the USA.

Bribes...Jose Maria Marin

"I'd like to remind Mo Salah that your mother is still in Egypt. You are abroad and can do as you wish. Those who understand, understand"

Khaled Lateif, an Egypt FA board member, warns the Liverpool striker (right) in no uncertain terms after he criticised his country's World Cup preparations

SPAIN

La Liga captains oppose USA game plan

A plan to play one La Liga match a season in the United States has been denounced by the Spanish footballers' association.

Barcelona skipper Lionel Messi and the captains of the 19 other clubs in the country's top flight are reported to have discussed how they will oppose the proposal.

They were responding to an announcement by La Liga president Javier Tebas, who agreed a 15-year partnership with Relevant, a sports and entertainment group which operates the International Champions Cup.

Fraud...Juan Angel Napout

HEROES & VILLAINS

ARSENE WENGER

Arsenal's former manager was awarded the title Knight Grand Commander of the Humane Order of African Redemption – the highest honour possible in the west African country of Liberia. The Frenchman was inducted into the country's Order of Distinction by its president George Weah, who played under the Frenchman at Monaco.

GURAM KASHIA

Georgia's captain was the inaugural recipient of UEFA's #EqualGame award after he wore a rainbow armband in support of the LGBT community while playing for Dutch side Vitesse last October. The defender's stance saw rioting from protestors in his homeland and calls for him to be dropped from the national side. But the 31-year-old said: "I will always keep defending equality and equal rights for everyone, wherever I will play."

Equality... Guram Kashia

LUKA MODRIC

The Real Madrid and Croatia midfielder was voted UEFA's European player of the year, ahead of Cristiano Ronaldo and Mohamed Salah.

EL FARDOU BEN NABOUHANE

The Comoros striker, known simply as "Ben", scored twice in the second half as Red Star Belgrade pulled off an unlikely comeback against Red Bull Salzburg in the final round of Champions League final qualifiers.

Double...Red Star Belgrade striker Ben

Jailed...Tomas Repka was sentenced to six months

TOMAS REPKA

The former Fiorentina, West Ham United and Czech Republic defender was given a six-month jail sentence for his role in an online "revenge porn" attack against his former wife.

RICKY GEORGE

The scorer of the winning goal when non-league Hereford United knocked Newcastle United out of the FA Cup in 1972 has been jailed for money laundering. Now 72, he was sentenced to two years for his involvement in the sale of a house without the knowledge or consent of the owner.

Banned... Jibril Rajoub

JIBRIL RAJOUB

The president of the Palestinian FA was banned for a year by FIFA for comments about Lionel Messi following Israel's proposed friendly against Argentina earlier this year. He called on Palestinians to burn shirts bearing Messi's name if the Argentina star went ahead and played in Jerusalem. The friendly was eventually cancelled.

LAZIO ULTRAS

Some of the Italian club's fans have called for women to be banned from the section of the Olympic Stadium where their ultras congregate. Before the first game of the season a flyer was distributed in which the Curva Nord was called a "sacred place" and said "women, wives and girlfriends" should avoid the first 10 rows.

"On the one hand good, but on the other you lose a bit of the essence of football. You can no longer trick or cheat the referee"

Sevilla midfielder Roque Mesa complains about the introduction of VAR

GOALS we'd like to see again

1 SAUL
Atletico Madrid v Real Madrid
Left-foot volley on the edge of the penalty area following a fantastic cross from the left wing.

2 ANDRES INIESTA
Vissel Kobe v Jubilo Iwata
Receives a pass from Lukas Podolski, beats his man with a drag back and rounds the keeper.

3 KEVIN MBABU
Young Boys v Dinamo Zagreb
Runs from his own half, plays the ball out wide and then meets the cross with a superb near-post finish.

4 LUCIANO ACOSTA
DC United v Orlando City
As Orlando break away in the last minute, Wayne Rooney tracks back from deep in the opposition half and makes a superb tackle inside his own half to dispossess Will Johnson before advancing and putting in a deep cross to the far post where Acosta heads home.

5 ALEJANDRO CHUMACERO
Puebla v Necaxa
Expertly cushions the ball with a knee on the corner of the penalty area and then produces an unstoppable volley that flies into the far corner.

6 MAHMOUD DAHOUD
Borussia Dortmund v RB Leipzig
Manages to meet a superb left-wing cross from Marcel Schmelzer with a twisting, diving header into the bottom corner.

WINNERS

ATLETICO MADRID
The first Europa League winners to claim the UEFA Super Cup since 2012.

TORONTO
Added the Canadian Championship to their MLS Cup and are now holders of two national titles simultaneously.

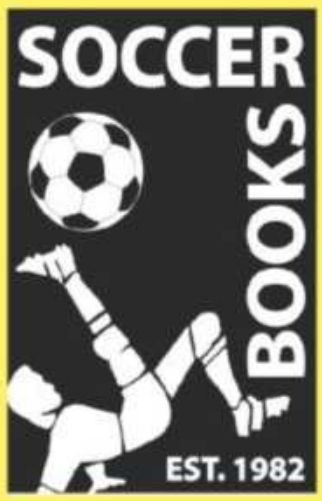
ZENIT
Overturned a 4-0 first-leg deficit in the Europa League to beat Dinamo Minsk 8-1 after extra-time for an 8-5 victory on aggregate.

LOSERS

JOSE MOURINHO
The Manchester United boss lost two of his first three league games – his worst start to a season.

ANTTI KORPELA
The QPR fan flew to England from Finland and saw his team lose 7-1 at West Brom and 3-0 to Bristol City.

FEYENOORD
The 2002 UEFA Cup winners lost 5-1 on aggregate to Slovak side Trencin in the third qualifying round of the Europa League.



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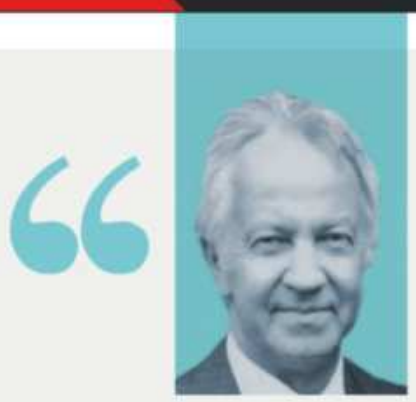


Keir RADNEDGE

THE INSIDER

Here to stay

Infantino and Ceferin are odds-on to retain their presidential posts

Like them or not, Gianni Infantino and Aleksander Ceferin now represent stability in the leadership of the world game; Infantino as likely president of FIFA for a further five years and Ceferin as prospective head of UEFA for the same period.

The lawyers from Switzerland and Slovenia are both odds-on to retain their posts when they face re-election next spring. Beyond that their futures may diverge, largely due to the nature of the constituencies that they serve.

FIFA remains a stormy sea even if the years of corruption control have been left behind. Comparatively speaking, it is far easier to lead Europe's governing body, with its tightly organised civil service and competitive structure. UEFA has its internal politics, but they are nowhere near as complex as the spider's web Infantino sits atop.

Infantino had been UEFA general-secretary when a chapter of accidents handed him the winning vote at FIFA Congress in 2016 after the bans inflicted on previous president Sepp Blatter and likely successor Michel Platini for their $2million sleight-of-hand in the FIFA accounts. Platini's defenestration also provided the power vacuum in UEFA which allowed the eastern and Nordic blocks to propel Ceferin to command.

Initially it was thought by many that Ceferin was an Infantino ally. As time has passed, however, Ceferin has emerged as his own man, and his increasing readiness to stand up for Europe has quashed that old theory.

The two men are also very different in style and procedure.

Infantino had been in office just a matter of minutes when he scrapped the concept of a figurehead president which had been set up by compliance chairman Domenico Scala. He wanted to be an upfront president like Blatter and wasted no time in clearing out all the middle and top-level management of the previous regime.

Stability...Gianni Infantino (left) and Aleksander Ceferin

The most recent man out of the door has been Marco Villiger, whose departure was perhaps the most significant. Legal director and then joint-deputy secretary-general alongside former Croatia midfielder Zvonimir Boban, his sudden exit after 16 years at FIFA suggests Infantino is confident the worst of the FIFAGate years are in the past.

> Infantino is so confident that he announced his intention to seek re-election at Congress in Moscow on the eve of the World Cup

Villiger's unrivalled understanding of the complexities of the scandal-scarred years is no longer required to protect the world governing body. Without doubt his sudden fall from FIFA grace has been cushioned by the millionaire terms of a confidentiality-protected severance deal.

After graduating in 2000 from the University of Zurich, Villiger joined FIFA two years later and became head of disciplinary matters until after the 2006 World Cup in Germany. The following year he became director of the legal division. And in that role he decided to bring in top lawyers Quinn Emanuel Urquhart & Sullivan ahead of the FIFAGate earthquake launched by the Swiss and US authorities in May 2015.

Blatter, remarkably, has denied all prior knowledge of the appointment of Quinn Emanuel. He also believes Villiger and the then secretary-general Jerome Valcke knew in advance about the police raid on Zurich's Baur au Lac hotel when seven senior football executives were detained on the eve of FIFA Congress

Gone...Marco Villiger

on corruption charges. Villiger has kept his own silence. As ever, he has remained content to leave the media grandstanding to the presidents and secretary-generals. His stance is not expected to change.

Infantino, having already raided UEFA for a number of his former trusties, is reportedly considering the replacement of Villiger with Alasdair Bell, who has been director of legal affairs at Nyon since 2010.

Infantino's confidence is such at present that he announced his intention to seek re-election at Congress in Moscow on the eve of the World Cup finals. He was, in effect, daring anyone to stand against him.

At one time that might have been Asian president Sheikh Salman bin Ibrahim Al Khalifa, but he has his own problems with Saudi Arabia's Adel Ezzat contesting the AFC's top job.

This development is intriguing as Saudi funding is thought to be crucial to the mysterious $25billion offer to FIFA to restructure the Club World Cup and create a Global Nations League.

That would raise speculation about Infantino's sympathies were it not for the attempt by the Saudi-based BeoutQ pirate channel to undermine Qatar's BeIN Sports, which has bought TV rights across the Gulf and north Africa to the World Cup, Champions League, Premier League and Ligue 1 among others.

To be clear, the BeoutQ campaign threatens not merely BeIN but the entire protective structure of TV sports rights. FIFA cannot afford to stand idly by, whatever the diplomatic delicacy of Infantino's political sympathies.

And this is where Ceferin may come into the picture.

Ceferin, in 2016, was the elective preference of the medium and small federations who comprise a majority within UEFA. He has already had expressions of re-election support from several of the major FAs, including England – who will need him onside if, as expected, a UK co-hosting pursuit for the 2030 World Cup is forthcoming to rival the bid from Uruguay, Paraguay and Argentina.

This will place Ceferin in an even more important role within FIFA, in which he is already a vice-president. If he can step in where Infantino may fear to tread over the pirate TV issue then his own status will soar.

When Ceferin became president of UEFA he thought, by his own admission, that it was a part-time job. He soon learned differently.

Infantino is 48, while Ceferin is 50. These two can be around for a long time to come. Or, at least, for the next five years. And then what? WS

Euro 2024 D-Day is looming

September 27 will see UEFA's executive committee decide whether Germany or Turkey should host the finals of Euro 2024. Note, the executive committee, not the full membership as with FIFA and the World Cup.

Turkey had wanted 2020 but its federation was undermined by its own government, which preferred to back a simultaneous bid by Istanbul to land the Olympic Games. That led then-UEFA president Michel Platini to come up with his idea for the derided, all-over-the-place finals.

With an expanded field of 24 teams Germany is now the clear favourite, particularly considering the political and security complexities of choosing Turkey at a time when its currency is on the slide after a political fall-out with the United States.

German confidence has been rattled by the Mesut Ozil affair but UEFA's ExCo, particularly thinking of the 2020 fiasco, is likely to vote for a safe bet. A few of Reinhard Grindel's colleagues may even feel some sympathy for the clumsily naive and comparatively new DFB president.

Mind you, France thought it was a UEFA shoe-in for Euro 2016 then finished up pipping Turkey by only one vote.

That is one reason why Turkey believes 2024 is its turn.

Snap decision... the Timsah Arena in Bursa will form part of Turkey's bid

"Jimmy came from an era that defines us as a club. Even today, over 50 years on, the stadium proudly bears his name on a stand and he is someone who was, and is, idolised by fans of every generation"

Burnley chairman Mike Garlick (left) pays tribute to Jimmy McIlroy

OBITUARY

Jimmy McILROY (1931 -2018)

Danger man...in action against Tottenham Hotspur

The greatest player in Burnley's history, Jimmy McIlroy was also one of the finest to represent Northern Ireland.

A playmaking inside-right, he scored 10 goals in 55 appearances for his country between 1951 and 1965 and was a member of the side that reached the quarter-finals of the World Cup in 1958 before losing to the France of Raymond Kopa and Just Fontaine.

McIlroy also played 497 games for Burnley between 1950 and 1962, winning the league title in 1960 and reaching the quarter-finals of the European Cup the following season before losing to Hamburg.

A statement from Burnley read: "[The club are] deeply saddened to learn of the death of our greatest ever player. A giant of a man. The thoughts of everyone connected with the club are with his family and friends at this sad time."

McIlroy started his career at Northern Irish club Glentoran in 1949 before moving to Burnley one year later. He went on to score 131 goals during a time the club describe as their "golden age".

In 1962 Burnley finished league and FA Cup runners-up but, after falling out with manager Harry Potts, McIlroy moved to the "veterans team" put together by Tony Waddington at Stoke City. He partnered Stanley Matthews in their Second Division title-winning side in 1963 and totalled 116 further league appearances with the club before moving on to Oldham Athletic and finally retiring from playing in 1967.

Hero...Burnley's best

He was Oldham manager from 1965 to 1968, and also took charge of Bolton Wanderers for a brief period in 1970. He later worked as a writer with a local newspaper, the *Burnley Express*.

Burnley's Turf Moor ground has a stand named after McIlroy, who was awarded a testimonial in 2009. In 2011, he was made an MBE for services to football and to charity, and asked if he could receive the honour at Turf Moor rather than Buckingham Palace.

World Cup...Northern Ireland's side in 1958 (McIlroy is front row, second from left)

In an interview with the *Belfast Telegraph* in 2008, he revealed that he turned down lucrative offers to leave Burnley, including one from Sampdoria.

He said that the Italian club's coach met him on the morning of the 1962 FA Cup Final, which Burnley lost 3-1 to Tottenham Hotspur, and "promised me all sorts: a villa overlooking the Mediterranean, an international school for my children, wages way beyond what I was getting in England".

McIlroy added: "But when I went back to the hotel and told my wife she said to me: 'What would we want to leave Burnley for?'

"I even had a chance to go to South America, River Plate in Argentina, when I went on tour with Stoke there. Again I rang my wife and said there's good money here, and she just said: 'Sure, but what would we want to leave Burnley for?'"

Keir Radnedge

"Smartphones kill my players. Smartphones kill the brain! They spend too much time on mobile phones. That's destroying them!"

Gigi Becali, owner of Romania's FCSB, on the ills of modern footballing life

Josef MARTINEZ (Atlanta United)

Record... Martinez

The Venezuelan striker set a new MLS record when he scored his 28th goal of the season for Atlanta against Orlando City.

Martinez had previously matched the record of 27 set by Roy Lassiter in the inaugural MLS season in 1996, and equalled by Chris Wondolowski in 2012 and then by Bradley Wright-Phillips in 2014.

Martinez arrived at Atlanta last year with a mixed record in European football, having failed to shine at Torino and during indifferent spells in Switzerland with Young Boys and Thun.

But Atlanta coach Gerardo Martino was well aware of Martinez from his time in charge of Argentina.

"We knew him well because during Copa America he drove us pretty crazy along with Salomon Rondon up front," says former Barcelona boss Martino.

"In reality what happened is I had to imagine him as a number nine because I'd never seen him play as a number nine.

"But exactly what I like are number nines who can play and not just finish.

"Josef has 28 goals but also various assists, some really nice assists."

HENDRIK WEYDANDT (Hanover)
The 23-year-old striker was signed from fourth-tier Germania Egestorf in the summer and scored three goals in his first two games.

AXEL WITSEL (Borussia Dortmund)
The Belgian midfielder joined the growing band of European returnees from the Chinese Super League and announced himself in the Bundesliga with a fine performance in Dortmund's opening-round defeat of RB Leipzig.

ROBERTO PEREYRA (Watford)
The Argentinian was key as Watford won their opening three games of a top-flight season for the first time.

ANDRE SILVA (Sevilla)
The Portuguese striker, who struggled at Milan last season, scored a hat-trick on his debut in La Liga as Sevilla won 4-1 away to Rayo Vallecano.

DUSAN TADIC (Ajax)
The Serbian hit the ground running in Amsterdam following his £10m summer move from Southampton, playing a key role in Ajax's qualification for the Champions League group stage.

DENIS BOUANGA (Nimes)
The 23-year-old winger, signed by newly promoted Nimes from Lorient in the summer, was outstanding in his side's 3-1 win over Marseille.

arrow
other v

Paul GARDNER

THE INSIDER

The experts are holding youngsters back

Treatment... Leon Goretzka is attended to by Bayern Munich's team doctor, Hans Wilhelm Muller-Wohlfahrt

I find it increasingly difficult to summon up interest when I hear that football – maybe FIFA, maybe UEFA, maybe the FA – announces that it has appointed yet another committee or panel or advisory group. And that is because these select bodies rarely seem to have much impact.

There must have been an occasion when an expert committee came up with something of fundamental importance that the sport adopted, but at the moment I cannot think of one.

Appointing an expert committee merely poses as action. In reality, it is a tried and trusted method of postponing action. No self-respecting expert committee can be expected to complete its lucubrations in less than a year. Time enough to smother any urgency; even for the original problem to have been forgotten before any report or recommendations appear.

Another quibble I have with many of these studies is that they smack more of laboratory theory than of the realities of the game itself.

A recent study, published in the *British Journal of Sports Medicine*, is a good example. It is part of a UEFA-sponsored study of injuries. A worthy enough topic, but did we really need a paper put together by a five-member expert committee, based on 77 reports from 36 top clubs in 17 European countries and featuring 35 scholarly references, to tell us that in a club where the coach and the team doctor work harmoniously there are fewer injuries than in clubs where the two do not get along?

Is there some hidden value in that finding? Unlikely, as by the committee's own cautious admission it is "unclear that poor communication causes poor injury rates, just that they are seen in association with each other".

What, then, is the value of this study? In its own words: "This study can provide club medical teams with data to support developing team programmes that underpins developing communications skills."

The practical evidence produced by the study is that teams with poor communication between medical and coaching staffs had a four to five per cent lower training attendance by players, and less player-availability at matches – 82 per cent as opposed to 88 per cent.

While it would be ridiculous to downplay the importance of increased fitness, one would need to know exactly what these figures meant in terms of team performance. And by that I mean results.

Did the teams with better player-availability do better on the pitch? Even that is not easy to measure. After all, better than what? Their opponents? Their own

expectations? Than they did last year – with different players, no doubt?

I am in no way belittling the work put into this report, but I do find it extraordinary that in a study that emphasises the importance of communication between doctors and coaches, the conclusion is presented entirely from the medical point of view, while the main concern of coaches – wins and losses – is not even mentioned.

We know that coaches and medics are always likely to cross swords over how long it takes to return an injured player to fitness.

For example, imagine that tomorrow is the season's most important game, a semi-final, and after that, a three-week wait for the Final. Your star player is coming back from injury and as the coach you want him in the semi. The medic says no as he needs a couple more days recovery time. Neither coach

> Teams with poor communication between medical and coaching staffs had a four to five per cent lower training attendance by players

nor doctor can be certain he is getting things right, but there is one certainty: the doctor will be cautious.

I would suggest to UEFA, and all the other football bodies that are likely to sponsor and finance medical research on the sport, that this matter of medical caution and the likelihood that it will run counter to the coach's needs is a suitable topic for research.

Is it possible, for instance, that expert caution is holding young players back? Is that why we see so few teenage stars? Why 60 years elapsed between the 17-year-old Pele's sensational 1958 World Cup and the next teenager to star in a World Cup Final, France's Kylian Mbappe, earlier this year? WS

REPORTS WE COULDN'T MAKE UP

Hunger... Mathias Pogba

1 POGBA TOO FAT

Mathias Pogba, the older brother of French World Cup winner Paul Pogba, was rejected after a trial with German third division side Uerdingen for being overweight.

The 27-year-old striker has five caps for Guinea but did not fit the bill for coach Stefan Kramer.

"He is not yet in good enough shape physically," said the Uerdingen boss. "Mathias is a big guy, and he has a good body for a number nine, but he still has too many kilos around his hips."

Pogba may well have been licking his lips at the opportunity of joining Kramer's club, whose full name is KFC Uerdingen 05...

2 ROSTOV FLOOR OPPONENTS

After losing 1-0 at home to Krylia Sovetov Samara in the Russian Premier League, a Rostov fan decided enough was enough and that things might improve if he attended matches with a lucky charm.

When Yenisey Krasnoyarsk were hammered 4-0 in the next game Rostov officials noticed the supporter among the crowd waving his "lucky carpet" and promptly decided to release a new fourth kit based on the design of the floor covering.

3 SUB SCORES NINE TIMES

In the women's Asian Games football tournament in Indonesia, China's Wang Shanshan scored nine times after coming on as a substitute against Tajikistan.

Wang, who plays for Chinese Women's Super League club Tianjin Huisen, scored her hat-trick of hat-tricks after coming on in the 56th minute, with the final three goals scored in three injury-time minutes to wrap up a 16-0 victory.

Tajikistan had already been beaten 16-0 by North Korea in their opening group game.

Super sub... Wang Shanshan

4 34 IS THE MAGIC NUMBER

Appie Nouri, the Ajax midfielder who suffered brain damage after collapsing in a pre-season friendly in July 2017, is being honoured by former team-mates this season.

Justin Kluivert of Roma and Amin Younes of Napoli, as well as Fiorentina's Kevin Diks and Philippe Sandler of Manchester City are wearing Nouri's number 34 shirt.

Tribute... Justin Kluivert

Fourth choice... Rostov's new kit

"It was the perfect move for me. I didn't want to go anywhere other than City"

Riyad Mahrez on moving to Manchester

PEOPLE ON THE MOVE

EUROPE

Milan appointed their former captain **PAOLO MALDINI** – who made 902 appearances for the club and won seven Serie A titles, five Champions Leagues and a Coppa Italia – as director of strategic development.

Iceland's new coach is **ERIK HAMREN**, who was in charge of Sweden for seven years before stepping down in 2016.

GARY HOLT replaced Kenny Miller as manager of Scottish Premiership side Livingston.

Strategic...Paolo Maldini

AFRICA

JAVIER AGUIRRE, who led his native Mexico at the 2002 and 2010 World Cups, was named coach of Egypt.

Korea opportunity ...Paulo Bento

After guiding Al Duhail to successive Qatari league titles, **DJAMEL BELMADI** signed a four-year deal to succeed Rabah Madjer as coach of Algeria.

Former Nigeria winger **EMMANUEL AMUNEKE** was appointed coach of Tanzania, while **VINCENT MASHAMI** took charge of Rwanda.

SUMMER 2018 THE BIGGEST DEALS

Atletico...Lemar

Juventus...Cancelo

Chelsea...Kepa

€145m	*Kylian Mbappe (Monaco, Fra, to PSG, Fra)
€100m	Cristiano Ronaldo (Real Madrid, Spa, to Juventus, Ita)
€80m	Kepa Arrizabalaga (Athletic Bilbao, Spa, to Chelsea, Eng)
€67.8m	Riyad Mahrez (Leicester City, Eng, to Manchester City, Eng)
€65m	Thomas Lemar (Monaco, Fra, to Atletico Madrid, Spa)
€62.5m	Alisson (Roma, Ita, to Liverpool, Eng)
€60m	Naby Keita (RB Leipzig, Ger, to Liverpool, Eng)
€59m	Fred (Shakhtar Donetsk, Ukr, to Manchester United, Eng)
€57m	Jorginho (Napoli, Ita, to Chelsea, Eng)
€45m	Fabinho (Monaco, Fra, to Liverpool, Eng)
€45m	Richarlison (Watford, Eng, to Everton, Eng)
€45m	Vinicius Junior (Flamengo, Bra, to Real Madrid, Spa)
€41m	Malcom (Bordeaux, Fra, to Barcelona, Spa)
€40m	Arthur (Gremio, Bra, to Barcelona, Spa)
€40m	Joao Cancelo (Valencia, Spa, to Juventus, Ita)
€40m	*Douglas Costa (Bayern Munich, Ger, to Juventus, Ita)
€40m	*Goncalo Guedes (PSG, Fra, to Valencia, Spa)
€40m	Alvaro Odriozola (Real Sociedad, Spa, to Real Madrid, Spa)
€38m	Felipe Anderson (Lazio, Ita, to West Ham United, Eng)
€38m	Radja Nainggolan (Roma, Ita, to Internazionale, Ita)
€37m	Thilo Kehrer (Schalke, Ger, to PSG, Fra)
€35.9m	Clement Lenglet (Sevilla, Spa, to Barcelona, Spa)
€35m	Thibaut Courtois (Chelsea, Eng, to Real Madrid, Spa)
€30.25m	Yerry Mina (Barcelona, Spa, to Everton, Eng)
€30m	Aleksandr Golovin (CSKA Moscow, Rus, to Monaco, Fra)
€30m	Fabian Ruiz (Real Betis, Spa, to Napoli, Ita)
€30m	Jean Michael Seri (Nice, Fra, to Fulham, Eng)
€30m	Lucas Torreira (Sampdoria, Ita, to Arsenal, Eng)
€30m	Andre-Frank Zambo Anguissa (Marseille, Fra, to Fulham, Eng)
€29m	*Anthony Modeste (Cologne, Ger, to Tianjin Quanjian, Chn)
€28m	Abdou Diallo (Mainz, Ger, to Borussia Dortmund, Ger)
€28m	Jefferson Lerma (Levante, Spa, to Bournemouth, Eng)
€26.65m	Steven Nzonzi (Sevilla, Spa, to Roma, Ita)
€25m	Issa Diop (Toulouse, Fra, to West Ham United, Eng)
€25m	*Geoffrey Kondogbia (Valencia, Spa, to Internazionale, Ita)
€25m	Bernd Leno (Bayer Leverkusen, Ger, to Arsenal, Eng)
€25m	James Maddison (Norwich City, Eng, to Leicester City, Eng)
€25m	Kevin Strootman (Roma, Ita, to Marseille, Fra)
€25m	Simone Verdi (Bologna, Ita, to Napoli, Ita)
€25m	Jannik Vestergaard (Borussia Monchengladbach, Ger, to Southampton, Eng)

(loan deal made permanent)*

For more summer transfers, go to worldsoccer.com

"Good young players don't compete in China or in Asia"

Clarence Seedorf ignores China-based Benjamin Moukandjo and Christian Bassogog from his first Cameroon squad

Appointments, sackings and loans

Dutch duo...Clarence Seedorf (left) and Patrick Kluivert

Seedorf and Kluivert take charge of Cameroon

Former Holland midfielder **CLARENCE SEEDORF** was appointed coach of Cameroon, with ex-international team-mate **PATRICK KLUIVERT** as his assistant.

Seedorf spent three months in charge of Deportivo La Coruna last season but could not prevent their relegation from La Liga.

Kluivert worked most recently as sporting director at French champions Paris Saint-Germain.

SOUTH AMERICA

LIONEL SCALONI was named as temporary coach of Argentina, in place of Jorge Sampaoli, whom Scaloni served as an assistant at the 2018 World Cup.

Colombia under-20s coach **ARTURO REYES** was put in charge of the senior team's September friendlies against Venezuela and Argentina, after the federation announced that a decision over "whether Jose Pekerman and his team will continue remains undefined".

ASIA

Ex-Cameroon captain and four-time African footballer of the year, **SAMUEL ETO'O** joined Qatar Sports Club after leaving Turkish club Konyaspor.

South Korea appointed former Portugal boss **PAULO BENTO** as coach of the national team. He was succeeded at Chinese Super League side Chongqing Dangdai Lifan by **JORDI CRUYFF**.

Uzbekistan hired **HECTOR CUPER** after he led Egypt to the World Cup finals this summer for the first time in 28 years.

Japanese striker **KEISUKE HONDA** joined reigning A-League champions Melbourne Victory and will combine that playing role with coaching Cambodia.

Temporary...Lionel Scaloni

OUT

No more... Gerard Pique

Quit...Mario Mandzukic

EUROPE

World Cup winners with Spain in 2010, **GERARD PIQUE** of Barcelona and Manchester City's **DAVID SILVA** retired from international football.

Beaten finalists at this summer's tournament, **MARIO MANDZUKIC** and **DANIJEL SUBASIC** joined Croatia vice-captain **VEDRAN CORLUKA** in stepping down from national-team duty.

AFRICA

Having, at 45, become the oldest player to appear at a World Cup, Egypt goalkeeper **ESSAM EL HADARY** retired from international football.

Chelsea's **VICTOR MOSES**, who won the 2013 African Nations Cup with Nigeria, quit international football at the age of 27.

ASIA

Ex-England captain **TERRY BUTCHER** resigned as Philippines coach.

Over...Terry Butcher

Brian GLANVILLE

THE VOICE OF FOOTBALL

Secondary...Phil Foden's game time at Manchester City is limited

Club sides continue to ignore young players at the national team's peril

There is a worrying tendency for major English clubs to keep their outstanding young players out of the first team – at a time when they could be invaluable to an England side which is hardly overflowing with talent.

For a salient example there is Phil Foden, who sparkled in the Manchester City attack in the pre-season charity match at Wembley.

An attacker born in nearby Stockport, he can play up front or as an attacking midfielder. When an unfortunate injury ruled out the formidable Belgium international Kevin De Bruyne from the City side, it seemed a perfect opportunity for Foden to replace him. But, whatever his achievements at Wembley, Foden is as yet still no more than a secondary figure at City, and at the moment there is no sign that City are ready to send him out on loan elsewhere.

When Fulham recently accounted for Burnley at Craven Cottage, where was Ryan Sessegnon, a refulgent newcomer last season either at left-back or outside-left? The answer, alas, was on the bench, which he was allowed to leave only for the concluding few minutes.

Sessegnon was a revelation in last season's Championship and surely deserves an extended chance to show that ability in the top division.

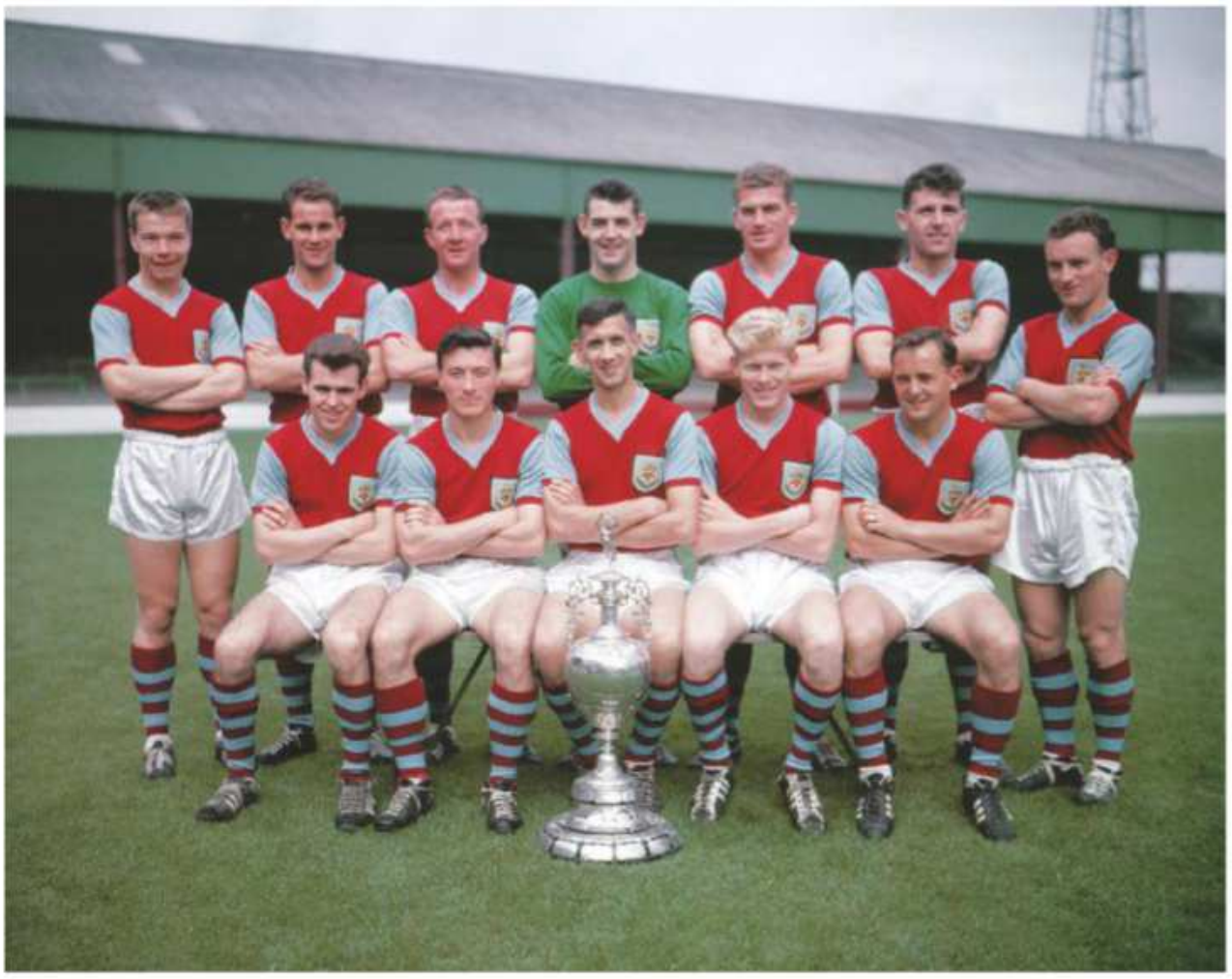
And then there is Ruben Loftus-Cheek. Praised by no less a figure than Glenn Hoddle for his performance, however controversially limited, for England in the World Cup finals, he excelled last season as what I would still call an inside-forward on loan at Crystal Palace, despite missing a substantial part of the season through injury. In the World Cup squad he, frankly, seemed to me the only English player truly capable of passing the ball to effect, which he particularly and impressively did in the third-place match against Belgium.

Competition...Ruben Loftus-Cheek

He has now returned from Palace to Chelsea, where there are still several years on his contract and he has virtually been told to contain himself in patience to wait his chance, competing for a midfield spot with Ross Barkley, who seems to have recovered after a long absence injured, Mateo Kovacic, who is on loan from Real Madrid, and Brazilian-Italian international Jorginho.

Blocked from a transfer in the Premier League, you could hardly blame Loftus-Cheek if he wants to go abroad.

Jimmy McIlroy, an elegant figure



Champions...Jimmy McIlroy (front row, second from left) and Burnley's 1960 side

It was sad indeed to learn of the death of an old and valued friend in Jimmy McIlroy. I always coupled him with two distinctly different team-mates: at Burnley, Jimmy Adamson, a tall lean, shrewdly effective wing-half, centre-half, captain and coach, and with Northern Ireland his fellow international Danny Blanchflower.

Like Blanchflower he was a fluent and inspirational figure, and between them they did so much to inspire the progress of a Northern Ireland team which knocked Italy out of the 1958 World Cup qualifiers and thus participated against all odds in the tournament in Sweden.

Who knows how much further they might have gone had not Danny's brother Jackie, such a resourceful centre-half, not been so shockingly injured in the appalling Munich air crash of the Manchester United team that February.

Elegance and poise were the essence of McIlroy's game and Matt Busby would have loved to have had him at Manchester United, where he would certainly have fitted in. Yet he stayed loyal to the far less celebrated Burnley, helping them to win a Championship title.

His ball control was impeccable, his use of the ball effective to a degree, and when Burnley surprisingly but deservedly won that 1960 championship, McIlroy and Adamson complemented one another perfectly.

It used to be something of a minor tradition that when Burnley were in town to play a London club, the two of them would come round for coffee at the house I then had in Notting Hill Gate. After which we would repair to the hotel where their team always stayed opposite South Kensington station, have lunch then take the coach to whatever London club they were playing.

VAR needed in the Premier League now not later

It was surely perverse of the Premier League to put off VAR for another season.

Manchester City were recently aggrieved when Wolves took the lead against them at Molineux via a manifest but ignored handball.

Then there is the question of serious but inadequately punished fouls; those fully deserving of a red rather than a yellow card, even no card at all, with the potential, crucial effect on a game.

On the same weekend, at Watford, a shocking foul on the gifted Crystal Palace winger Wilfried Zaha by Etienne Capoue incurred no more than a booking by referee Anthony Taylor. A tough man in his day, Graeme Souness did not mince his words, calling the challenge "100 per cent a red card".

Souness added: "Capoue set out to hurt Zaha. It tells me one of two things.

"Taylor has completely bottled it or he doesn't understand football. Capoue is trying to hurt him badly."

Shocking...Wilfried Zaha is fouled by Etienne Capoue

Maradona's misguided honesty

Interesting to see that Diego Maradona, a somewhat eccentric figure these days, should come out as a supporter of VAR, even though he admits it would have ruled out his notorious "Hand of God" goal against England in the Azteca in the World Cup of 1986.

"That goal wouldn't have stood if technology had been around," he admits. "I'll tell you something else. At the 1990 World Cup I used my hand to clear the ball off the lines. We were lucky because the referee didn't see it."

But he also added with some validity: "It's not just my goal that wouldn't have counted. Let's not forget England won the World Cup in 1966 with a shot that didn't go over the line."

Recently a friend who was sitting low down and close to the German goal assured me that he had a perfect view and that the ball did not cross the line.

Maradona, however, who seems extremely well informed, added that in the 2010 World Cup finals Frank Lampard's obvious goal versus Germany, when his shot hit the underside of the bar and was well over the line, should have been ruled a goal.

The Germans, as we all too well know, went on to walk over England. But soccer psychologically is a strange game and who knows what might have happened had the goal stood as it should.

Hand of God...Maradona's goal against England

Arsenal's Ozil folly

Arsenal in their folly are paying Mesut Ozil an absurd £350,000 a week, yet they did not want to use him in the recent local derby against West Ham.

The German's skill is plain to see, his application much less so. But what can be said for the financial follies of a club prepared to pay him so much?

And this, by the way, a club which allowed Jack Wilshere, who had been with them since he was nine years old, to slip away for nothing.

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eye witness

James Montague in Zagreb

CROATIA

Modric unites and divides a nation

World Cup star still due in court charged with perjury

As soon as the day had broken, rain fell heavily and steadily in Zagreb. But that didn't matter. Tens of thousands of people still streamed into Ban Jelacic Square six hours before kick-off. A stage and a big screen had been set up, as it had all through Croatia's incredible run in the 2018 World Cup.

Big crowds had greeted Croatia's victory against the hosts Russia, on penalties, in

Home support...fans back in Croatia watch the World Cup

SINGER
HRVATSKA

the quarter-finals, and even more arrived for the semi-final comeback against England, celebrating wildly with flares and smoke bombs. But this would be the biggest and the most important. This, after all, was the World Cup Final.

The bars and cafes that surround the capital's main square were full of fans who had come not just from around the country but from across the world. The diaspora, many of whom were children when they left the country during the ruinous Yugoslav Wars of the early 1990s, had returned from Australia, Germany, Austria and beyond. All were draped in scarves and the iconic red-and-white check found on Croatia's flag.

"As soon as we beat England I was like, right, I'm getting a ticket," said Chris Nadj, a 27-year-old plumber from Australia, who was singing songs with hundreds of others in the main square. He had flown 27 hours to be here, paying £1,750 for a ticket.

"It's a once-in-a-lifetime experience," continued Nadj, as fans let off smoke bombs nearby. "How could I miss this?"

Many had travelled from Germany, which took a large number of Croats on a guest-worker programme in the 1970s. "It was my duty to come," said Zvonimir Barisic, who was born in Germany and had travelled to Zagreb with his wife and two children.

"We just had to come. We will write history if we win or not." Half the family wore Luka Modric's name on the back of their Croatian national-team jerseys. "He is a legend," added Barisic.

In fact, Modric's name was everywhere – something that a month earlier would have been unthinkable for most Croats.

The country's football team has long been seen as an important symbol of national unity, ever since Croatia's first post-independence president, Franjo Tudjman, attached huge political importance to their appearance at the 1998 World Cup, just three years after the end of the Croatian War of Independence. Croatia made it to the semi-finals, where they lost to France, but the defeat was seen as a victory in helping cement a collective identity at home, as well as securing the fledgling nation's place in the wider world.

Before this summer's World Cup, however, the national team was doing the opposite; dividing rather than uniting the country, with a corruption scandal managing to poison the relationship

Writing is on the wall...graffiti in Zagreb telling Mamic to "leave"

> "It was my duty to come...we will write history if we win or not"
>
> **German-born Croatian fan Zvonimir Barisic on why he travelled to Zagreb to watch the Final**

Fan...Croatia's president, Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic

between the team, its players and the public at large.

The scandal centred around Zdravko Mamic, who for years had effectively controlled Croatia's biggest club, Dinamo Zagreb, and especially the transfers of some of its best players to big European clubs. His influence spread to the Croatian Football Federation and even politics, with the country's president Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic – whose presence at Croatia games in Russia gave her international fame – admitting that Mamic had helped sponsor some of her election campaign.

But Mamic's web of corruption started to unravel when former Croatian international Eduardo Da Silva sued him and exposed his practice of signing young players to unfair and ruinous contracts.

Corruption... Zdravko Mamic

Trial...Luka Modric gives evidence in Osijek last year

Mamic, it emerged, had been taking a cut of any signing-on fees, while players were obliged to pay a percentage of their wages to him until the end of their careers. Eventually Mamic was taken to court and convicted of tax offences connected to the skimming of player's contracts.

The trial was moved from Zagreb, where he was connected to several judges, to the city of Osijek, and at the centre of proceedings was Real Madrid star Modric. During last year's trial it emerged that, of the £10million the midfielder was due as a signing-on fee when he joined Tottenham Hotspur in 2008, Modric received £1.7m. The rest went to Mamic.

Modric, however, changed his statement to the police and when presented with his statement in court he said: "That...that I've never said...that it...that...that it was drawn up afterwards.

"I told you then that I couldn't remember when it had been done."

The whole thing aired on TV and Modric was widely mocked and disparaged for it. In March he was charged with perjury and still faces a five-year prison sentence. Mamic was found guilty and sentenced to six years but absconded before he could be taken to jail and is currently on the run in neighbouring Bosnia.

Modric, who won his fourth Champions League title in May and can lay claim to being Croatia's greatest-ever player, became a public hate figure. When the tournament began, some Croatia fans even wore shirts with one of Modric's now much-derided answers from that trial printed on the back: "I don't remember."

According to Juraj Vrdoljak, a columnist

with Croatian website Telesport: "Modric was the most divisive figure in Croatian football. On the one hand he is the symbol of this run, on the other hand he epitomises the whole thing with Mamic.

"People see he can use his power and status to change things. Instead, he joined forces with the man who ran his career.

"He had a chance to turn things over but stuck with him."

Mamic's trial had ramifications far outside sport and seemed to represent an intractable corruption at the heart of a heavily divided Croatian society that joined the European Union in 2007 but has yet to see many material benefits.

Since independence, the country has lost almost 10 per cent of its population as its young people flee to Germany or Austria for a better life. But the memories and anger of that trial faded as Croatia battled through the World Cup in Russia; through a tough group stage, where they demolished Argentina 3-0, and then beat Denmark on penalties in the knockout stage. Modric's name returned to the back of many fan's shirts, too.

"Modric is not just a hero here; he is like a God," said Mislav Dusic, a Croatian who lives in Austria, shouting over loud chanting in a bar on the edge of the square where hundreds of people were singing "*Lijepa lisi*" (you are beautiful), an anthem by ultra-nationalist Croatian singer Thompson.

An hour before kick-off the rain stopped, rock music began on a stage set up in the square and the sun emerged.

Every space of the square was filled as rock stars and pop singers belted out patriotic tunes. Soon, the crowd was silenced as France took the lead, before exploding in to life with flares and smoke bombs as they equalised shortly afterwards. But as the game ebbed away, resignation and pride were all they had left. After the final whistle, when France had won 4-2, the crowd cheered and applauded their players. There was no anger or recrimination.

"We didn't give up," said Dinko Regula, a former professional water polo player watching in a bar just off the square nearby. "Even if you are small, but play with your heart, you can make anything happen. Modric is the hero, but let's see, let's cool down."

Croatia, added Regula, needed more

Loud and proud...Croatian supporters continue to celebrate despite their side's loss to France in the Final

Heroes...Croatian players sing the national anthem in Zagreb's Ban Jelacica Square

Return...fans welcome home the squad

justice, not less. Even being a star player for Real Madrid should not, he believed, give you immunity from that. "This is the message for the politicians," he said, as a procession of cars blared their horns in celebration behind him.

"Look at this. Look what we can do. Together we could move mountains."

The next day half a million people descended on the streets of Zagreb, an incredible number given that Croatia's total population is four million. Part of the city was shut down as the team bus made a slow journey to Ban Jelacic Square, where the players were presented as heroes.

But it wasn't quite the moment of catharsis and unity it could have been. They were joined on stage by the singer Thompson, who gained his notoriety by singing ultra-nationalist songs during and after the Croatian War of Independence.

One of his famous hits begins with the chant "*Za dom spremni*", a chant used by the Ustase – Croatia's World War Two Nazi-puppet regime who were responsible for the extermination of hundreds of thousands of Jews, Roma and Serbs.

And while the crowd appeared lukewarm to his appearance, there was no doubting that a significant number of supporters still eulogise the symbols of the Ustase era. The Ustase flag was a regular fixture in the days before and after the Final, and there were several pro-Ustase chants and Nazi-style salutes.

While there is no doubting that reaching a World Cup Final is an incredible achievement, by itself it will not reform Croatian football and society. In fact, it might provide proof to those in power that their system works.

"The Mamic influence is still there because the whole system is based on people he installed in the FA," says Telesport's Vrdoljak. One example is that of Croatian FA chief executive Damir Vrbanovic, who was sentenced to three years in prison as part of the Mamic trial but was seen next to the Croatian president in the VIP lounge during the World Cup.

> **"It's still the Zdravko Mamic system, it's still the Zdravko Mamic federation"**
> Telesport's Juraj Vrdoljak

"Just because Mamic is not in Zagreb to manage his system in person doesn't mean a lot," adds Vrdoljak. "It's still the Zdravko Mamic system, it's still the Zdravko Mamic federation."

While Mamic remains on the run, Modric's perjury trial is still to come. Many have called for him to be pardoned but many more want justice to prevail, regardless of who he is – although no one believes he will face any jail time.

"He'll likely get a suspended sentence," believes Vrdoljak. "People are still euphoric in a lot ways but the dust is settling down at the moment.

"The problems are still present and the run to the Final didn't actually do much to deal with those problems."

However it goes there is one thing that everyone can agree on. For a brief few hours one day in July, Croatians were on top of the world. And no one can take that away from them. WS

Flying high...a giant flag greets the national squad on its return to Zagreb

PARIS
Fly
Emirates

THE BOY WITH THE WORLD AT HIS FEET

Words: Howard Johnson

Winning the World Cup at 19 looks to be just the beginning for the young French superstar

If you're looking for the game's current greatest overachiever, then look no further than Rafael Varane. Part of the France side that beat Croatia in Moscow in July, the 25-year-old added a World Cup-winner's medal to an unbelievable haul of four Champions League gongs.

Yet despite Varane's phenomenal success, he is nowhere near as feted or famous as his French team-mate Kylian Mbappe who, at the age of just 19, is undoubtedly the hottest property in world football today.

Mbappe may not have picked up as much silverware as Varane but no one can doubt that he has already won more hearts.

Having made his senior international debut barely 18 months ago, the Paris-born striker is already the player every youngster dreams of

being and every coach would love to sign.

His goal in the World Cup Final – a smart, right-foot drive beyond Croatia keeper and former Monaco team-mate Danijel Subasic – showed the world everything about Mbappe's qualities. Receiving a pass from Lucas Hernandez 25 yards from goal, he took the ball side on and then swivelled quickly, shifting the ball wider to create space away from defender Domagoj Vida before rifling a shot low into the left-hand corner of the net. Everything was done neatly, tidily and brilliantly, with minimum fuss and maximum efficiency.

Given the amount of talent at French boss Didier Deschamp's disposal, the fact that Mbappe started all seven World Cup games, scoring four goals, shows the esteem in which the coach – who has now won the World Cup both as a player and as a boss – holds the Paris Saint-Germain forward.

Watching Mbappe annihilate an experienced Argentina defence in France's first match of the knockout phase, a game in which he scored two goals, was one of the highlights of the tournament. His electric pace caused the South Americans all sorts of problems

> "Kylian has much more talent than I have. Have you seen what he can do at his age? I never had that level of ability"
> **Paul Pogba**

and earned France their opening goal when a scintillating break from within his own half – timed at an astonishing 37 kilometres per hour – saw Mbappe unceremoniously hauled down in the penalty area by Marcos Rojo for a spot kick that was duly converted by Antoine Griezmann. Former England defender Rio Ferdinand joked that Mbappe's pace was "illegal" and claimed the only thing to do when facing him is to pray.

"Against Belgium the rest of us were still getting warmed up," explained Griezmann. "But after just 20 seconds 'Kiki' [as Kylian is nicknamed] was already turning on the afterburners. He's the only one who can do that."

But Mbappe is not just a speedster. For one so young his all-round game has a maturity that even top-level pros find astonishing. "Kylian has much more talent than I have," says French midfielder Paul Pogba. "Have you seen what he can do at his age? I never had that level of ability."

This is praise indeed for a youngster with the world at his feet. But despite his tender age, Mbappe seems to handle the pressure of the world's spotlight shining on him with an incredible maturity. Much of the credit for this must go to his parents, who've always kept a watchful eye on the progress of their prodigy. It surely helps that both his mother and father have some personal understanding of the world of high-level sport.

Kylian's Cameroonian dad, Wilfried Mbappe Lottin, played regional football in France before becoming coach of the under-15 side at AS Bondy, a club situated in a suburb to the northeast of Paris. Born in Algeria, his mum, Fayza Lamari, was

Too quick...going past Kevin De Bruyne of Belgium in Russia

Timeline

DEC 2, 2015
Makes his debut for Monaco, against Caen, aged 16 years and 347 days and becomes the club's youngest-ever player.

FEB 20, 2016
Breaks Thierry Henry's record with a goal against Troyes to become Monaco's youngest scorer, at 17 years and 62 days.

MAR 6, 2016
Signs his first pro contract, agreeing a three-year deal that will tie him to Monaco until June 2019.

JUL 24, 2016
Is a Euro Under-19 winner as France beat Italy 4-0 in the Final, having scored five times in the tournament.

AS Bondy...where it all started

a top-level handball player at the same club. Dad now acts as Kylian's agent with the help of a Parisian law firm, Verheyden & Cognard.

"He's got good people around him," says former Cameroon international Patrick Mboma, who played with Kylian's dad at Bondy. "His parents both love sport and always look to do what's best for their son."

As for the youngster himself, he admits: "It's no secret that you need a solid family behind you if you want to succeed at the very highest level."

It's perhaps a good thing that both parents have always kept a watchful eye on their son. Never a tearaway, Kylian was nevertheless a little too lively for his own good at school. At the age of 12 one of his teachers recalls the youngster getting eight written warnings in just eight hours of lessons. "But he was such a nice kid that I made sure he wasn't expelled," recalls his French teacher, Nicole Lefevre.

It must have been hard for the youngster to keep his feet on the ground, though. Having signed with AS Bondy at the age of nine, his prodigious talent was soon recognised. "From an early age Kylian was phenomenal, a meteorite," says the club's president, Atmane Airouche. "His pace and vision were incredible."

Europe's biggest clubs were quick to show interest in the youngster and Mbappe even went to London to play in a trial match for Chelsea at the age of 11.

"We played a friendly against Charlton Athletic," he recalls. "It was my first experience abroad and a chance to see what the game was like in England."

In 2011 Mbappe was selected to attend the respected National Institute of Football at Clairfontaine for two years, where he was courted by Caen, Monaco, Bordeaux, Paris Saint-Germain and Real Madrid, and for a long time it looked as if Caen would get his signature. But in 2013 the 14-year-old signed for Monaco and joined the academy just as the Principality club was promoted back to the top flight of French football.

Mbappe's progress at Monaco was nothing short of remarkable. Having been selected for the French under-17 side in September 2014, he was scoring his first goals for Monaco's reserve side just over a year later.

Throughout his remarkable footballing ascendancy, however, he was still obliged to continue with his schooling, earning his baccalaureat in business management in September 2016.

Mbappe made his first-team debut at the end of 2015 in a 1-1 draw against Caen, coming off the bench to replace Fabio Coentrao in the 88th minute and becoming the youngest player ever to wear the Monaco shirt in Ligue 1, aged 16 years and 11 months.

He took the record previously held by Thierry Henry – and it wasn't long before the new kid on the block had stolen another of the future Arsenal star's records, this time for the youngest player to score a league goal for Monaco, when he netted in extra time against Troyes. And all of this was before Mbappe had even signed his first professional contract.

Champions...on his way to winning the 2017 title with Monaco

Mbappe also helped Monaco's under-19s win the prestigious Gambardella Cup in the summer of 2016, scoring two goals against Lens, and then picked up the European Under-19 Championship with France. Such was Mbappe's impact that Manchester City offered Monaco €40m for him that summer, a bid that

DEC 14, 2016
Scores his first hat-trick, in Monaco's 7-0 thrashing of Rennes in the French League Cup.

FEB 11, 2017
Scores the first Ligue 1 hat-trick of his career in a 5-0 victory at home to Metz.

FEB 21, 2017
Is on target in the Champions League for the first time, as Monaco lose 5-3 to Manchester City.

MAR 25, 2017
Comes on as a sub against Luxembourg and is the second-youngest player to appear for France, at 18 years, three months and five days.

was immediately rejected. In February 2017 he showed City exactly what they were missing when he scored against them in the Champions League.

The 2016-17 season proved to be unforgettable for both Mbappe and Monaco as the club pipped Paris Saint-Germain to the Ligue 1 title. He scored 15 league goals and an impressive further five in the Champions League.

In a Monaco team blessed with prodigious talent such as Bernardo Silva, Fabinho, Thomas Lemar, Radamel Falcao and Benjamin Mendy, he nonetheless cemented his reputation as the most exciting talent of them all.

Deschamps gave him his first full international cap when he brought him off the bench in a World Cup qualifier away against Luxembourg in March 2017 and Mbappe went on to make 10 appearances in total during the rest of the calendar year, scoring his first international goal in a 4-0 win against Holland in another qualifier.

"I don't like comparing players," said Thierry Henry. "Mbappe has to become Mbappe and nobody else. But wow, is he ever good! I really like watching him play."

The best...French president Emmanuel Macron congratulates him on winning FIFA's Young Player Award at the World Cup

Speculation surrounding a potential move for the 18-year-old reached fever pitch in the summer of 2017, and on the last day of the French transfer window it was announced that he would join PSG.

The deal was an interesting one, with the player signing for the capital club on a year's loan with an option to buy and a price set at an eye-watering €145m, plus add-ons. The purchase would be obligatory if PSG maintained top-flight status and would make him the second-most expensive player in football history.

> "I don't like comparing players. Mbappe has to become Mbappe and nobody else. But wow, is he ever good! I really like watching him play"
>
> **Thierry Henry**

"It's a dream for me to sign for PSG," said Mbappe after the deal was done. "The team plays attacking football and signing here also means I can come back to Paris where I was born and where I grew up. PSG is the place where I can both progress on a personal level and win trophies."

The year ended on a personal high as Mbappe came seventh in the voting for the Ballon d'Or – the youngest player ever to make the top 10. Not only that, his 33rd goal of the calendar year earned him the title of top French goalscorer of the year.

If 2017 was the year of personal achievement, then 2018 proved to be the year when his teams reaped rich rewards. PSG claimed the League Cup with a 3-0 victory over Mbappe's previous team, Monaco, in which he was named man of the match. He also picked up a second Ligue 1 winner's medal and played in the PSG side that won the French Cup. Not bad for a first season back in his hometown.

Of course, all of these impressive

AUG 31, 2017
Scores his first senior international goal, against Holland, and also joins PSG on loan, with a transfer fee set at €145 milli on, plus €35m in add-ons.

SEP 8, 2017
Marks his Paris Saint-Germain debut with a goal in a 5-1 win at Metz in Ligue 1.

MAY 8, 2018
Collects a French Cup winners' medal as PSG beat Les Herbiers 2-0 in the Final.

JUN 21, 2018
His goal in the 1-0 victory over Peru makes him the youngest French goalscorer in World Cup history at 19.

JUL 15 2018
His goal in the 4-2 win against Croatia means he is only the second teenager, after Pele, to score in a World Cup Final.

achievements were then eclipsed by the exploits of the French national side as they brought home a second World Cup from Russia.

Almost inevitably, Mbappe was named the best young player in the tournament.

"I can't describe how proud I am to have won the World Cup," he said. "I've realised a boyhood dream and to have made the entire French nation so happy? Well, I can't put a price on that."

Mbappe has instantly become the symbol of a new French spirit: young, dynamic, unafraid. The country's president, Emmanuel Macron, was clearly moved by the World Cup victory, and by Mbappe in particular – so much so that Macron instinctively kissed the youngster on the head when he was part of the official delegation that presented the trophy to the team in Moscow.

"Before we left for Russia he asked us to bring back a second star for France," laughs Mbappe. "Well, we ended up bringing the trophy back and taking it to his office, so I think we did OK."

Mbappe's short career really is the stuff of fairy tales for one so young. But there are still plenty of targets for this most special of players. Winning the Champions League with his club and a European Championship with his country, for starters. And then there's the challenge of winning individual honours as World Player of the Year.

With the era of Cristiano Ronaldo and Lionel Messi drawing to a close, it's not at all beyond the realms of possibility that this young, amiable and unassuming Frenchman might get his hands on that accolade sooner rather than later.

He may be called "Donatello" by his team-mates because of his resemblance to the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle, but surely he is much more like another cartoon hero: Superman. WS

Kylian Mbappe the numbers game

FRANCE

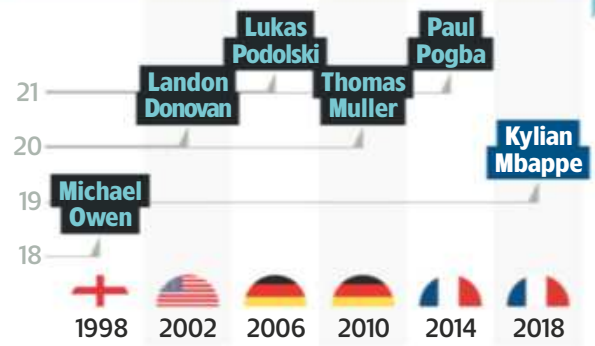
22
CAPS

8
GOALS

WORLD'S MOST EXPENSIVE TRANSFERS

€222m	**NEYMAR** *(Barcelona to PSG) 2017*
€145m	**KYLIAN MBAPPE** *(Monaco to PSG) 2018*
€140m	**PHILIPPE COUTINHO** *(Liverpool to Barcelona) 2018*
€105m	**OUSMANE DEMBELE** *(B Dortmund to Barcelona) 2017*
€105m	**PAUL POGBA** *(Juventus to Man Utd) 2016*
€100m	**CRISTIANO RONALDO** *(R Madrid toJuventus) 2018*
€100m	**GARETH BALE** *(Tottenham to R Madrid) 2013*

BEST YOUNG PLAYER AT WORLD CUP



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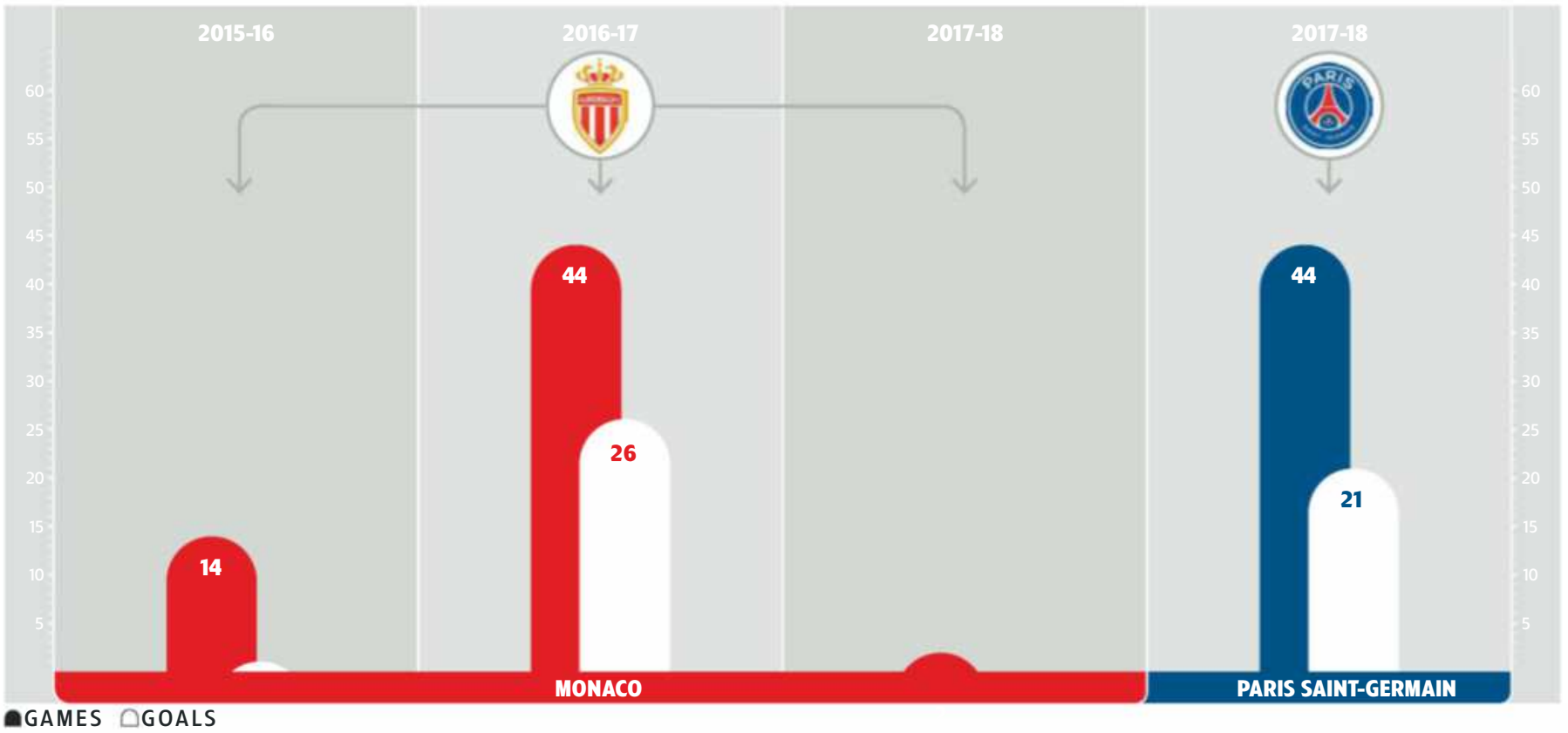
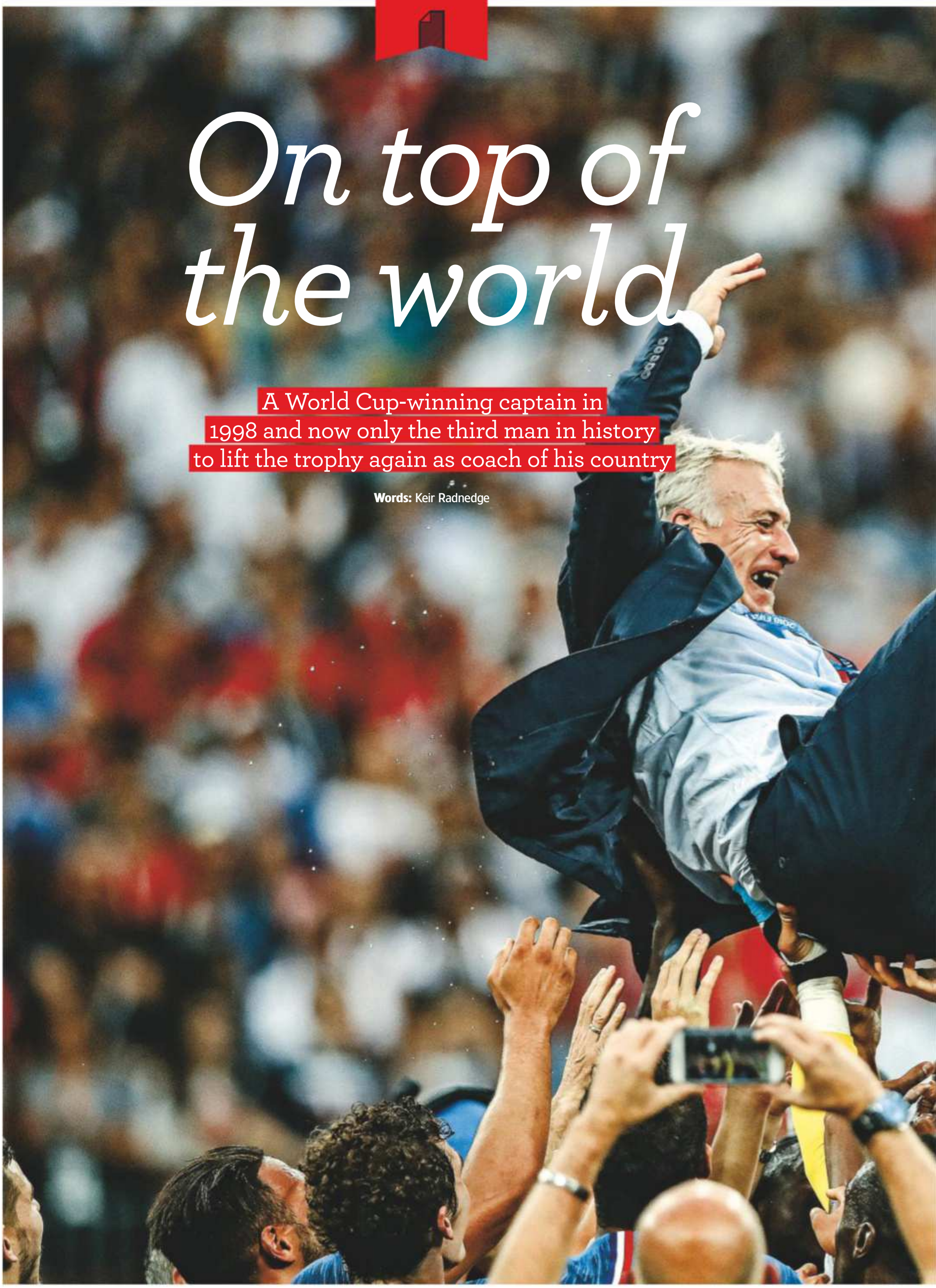




On top of the world

A World Cup-winning captain in 1998 and now only the third man in history to lift the trophy again as coach of his country

Words: Keir Radnedge

The French journalist held nothing back. It was 0-0 between France and Denmark in Moscow's Luzhniki Stadium at the World Cup. Both teams were already through to the knockout stage, but the only goalless draw of the finals was also the worst of the 64 games.

"We have the most boring team," he said. "We have the most boring coach, play the most boring football and we should go home as soon as possible."

Two weeks later France were worthy world champions. The Frenchman's tune and that of his colleagues had gone from minor to major and it was all down to Didier Deschamps. Only then could they go home. In triumph.

No one understands how to play tournaments better than the 49-year-old from Bayonne. He captained France to victory in the 1998 World Cup and the European Championship two years later, after which he retired from the national team having scored four goals in 103 games.

Deschamps was a good player, but not a great one. He was neat in the tackle, crisp with his passing and read the game to perfection. That was why Aime Jacquet appointed him national skipper in 1996. He was reliable, consistent and nimble enough to escape injury. He earned the respect that went with the armband.

At club level – with Marseille, Juventus, Chelsea and Valencia – those gifts were rewarded with success in the Champions League (twice), Club World Cup, UEFA Super Cup, Serie A (three times), Coppa Italia and FA Cup.

No question ever existed about Deschamps' future on his retirement in 2001. His transition into coaching was seamless with Monaco, Juventus and Marseille before he was the obvious choice to succeed Laurent Blanc as boss of *Les Bleus* in 2012.

After France fell to Germany in

the 2014 World Cup quarter-finals Deschamps acknowledged: "That was our level. We didn't deserve to go beyond that point."

Greater expectation awaited back home at Euro 2016, but Deschamps arrived with some uncertainties about his midfield make-up, notably how to draw the best out of Paul Pogba.

In the end, on the biggest occasion of many of his players' careers, France dominated the Final against Portugal but were beaten by an extra-time strike on the counter-attack.

Defeat was devastating for a man who had known such success on the international stage. But later Deschamps was able to analyse defeat in the Stade de France and use the lessons to win in Moscow. As he said, appreciating the irony, after the 4-2 defeat of Croatia in Luzhniki: "Maybe if we had won the Euros then we would not have won here in Russia."

For Deschamps, the foundation of victory was laid before the finals in picking the right squad.

He said: "The most important choices were made when we chose the 23 players. You need to choose what you think is the right balance on the pitch and on a human level – and then the players prove you right or wrong.

"Making the right choice is crucial because we spent 55 days together and I can say there were no problems. Sometimes I can be very hard with them but I do it for their own good. Even though they are very young they did listen, so when the competition grew tougher they became more brilliant."

France were among the quintet mentioned most often as likely winners before the finals, along with Brazil, Germany, Spain and Argentina. For Deschamps, however, the World Cup was not one tournament to win but two tournaments to win. The group stage was half the battle; the knockout stage was an entirely different half.

Disappointment... after losing in the Final of Euro 2016

And that was how he approached the challenge this summer.

France began against Australia, aware that outsiders are always at their most dangerous in their first game when hope and self-belief reign, however irrational.

A 2-1 victory was achieved, awkwardly, in Kazan. Antoine Griezmann scored the first from a penalty awarded by VAR and Aziz Behich's own goal was confirmed by goal-line technology. Deschamps started with Griezmann leading the line but it was only after the introduction of Olivier Giroud – as an orthodox centre-forward – at 1-1 in place of the Atletico Madrid man that France began to look more balanced.

"That was our hardest game," says Deschamps. "The first group game is always very important for belief and morale. Even though we won 2-1 in the end it was not a good start. I had some not-very-pleasant things to say to the boys the next day, especially our attacking players.

"Our approach to goal was boring, predictable. It was not what we had wanted. There was not enough commitment or determination. Happily, the players reacted for the next game."

> "It was not a good start. I had some not-very-pleasant things to say to the boys the next day"
>
> **Deschamps on the opening win against Australia**

That was against Peru and was also awkward before Kylian Mbappe's first-half goal settled matters. In Ekaterinburg, Deschamps started with the team that would eventually line up in the Final, with Giroud leading the line and Griezmann dropping back and wide where he could do more damage.

With two wins France were through to the knockout stage with a game to spare, and a goalless draw against Denmark left them top of Group C but in the toughest half of the next phase. The French media struggled for sufficient words to describe the contradiction between an awful game and a mission accomplished.

Deschamps had made wholesale changes, partly to protect three players on yellow cards, partly with a view to the physical test ahead. He said: "We have reached our most important goal, to be top of the group. It was not a very exciting match because the Danish team were also OK with a draw and we made many changes.

Skipper...receiving the trophy in 1998

"This was partly to protect the three players on yellow cards but also because, as you progress in a tournament, you can play teams who have not been able to benefit from this sort of turnover.

"That could be an advantage for us so we wanted to take it."

Arguably this was one of the marginal differences which turned the Final for a fresher French team against a Croatia side that had been taken to extra time in their three previous games.

Almost as an aside, Deschamps added: "Now we start climbing."

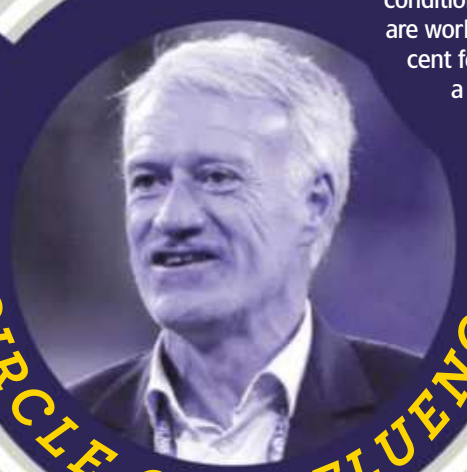
The ascent of Deschamps' football Everest began with one of the finals' best games: the 4-3 defeat of an Argentinian side who produced some of the sparks they never managed in the group stage. Victory will be remembered for Benjamin Pavard's goal and Mbappe matching Pele as the first teenager in 60 years to score twice in a knockout tie.

But, as Deschamps understood, victory was more than the mere result. The fact they had beaten Lionel Messi and company provided a vital injection of confidence and self-belief going into the quarter-finals against Uruguay.

All successful teams need a little fortune, and for France this was the injury absence of Edinson Cavani. Griezmann provided the free-kick assist for Raphael

Champion... celebrating in Russia

CIRCLE OF INFLUENCE



MARCELLO LIPPI
Deschamps won three Serie A titles and the Champions League at Juventus and soaked up all of his boss' tactical nous. "One day, Lippi told me that there's no one universal way of coaching," recalls Deschamps. "He explained that you always have to take into account the environment you find yourself in."

NORBERT NAVARRO
His coach at Bayonne said of the 11-year-old: "Even as a child, he had character and leader; he was born with that gift."

JEAN-CLAUDE SUAUDEAU
The young Deschamps' coach at Nantes. He has embraced much of Suaudeau's philosophy and personality – the marked preference for teamwork over individualism, the insistence on hard work, commitment and excellent physical conditioning – but in one key area the pair are worlds apart. Suaudeau was a 100 per cent football romantic, an advocate of a fluid, risk-taking style, while Deschamps is much more defensively-minded.

AIME JACQUET
France's triumph at the 1998 World Cup was, to an extent, built on the Jacquet-Deschamps axis of football-obsessive elder statesman coach and trusty skipper who kept the players on the straight and narrow. The pair had a great deal in common tactically and Deschamps has admitted: "I learnt a lot at Aime's side, especially how to handle a group in difficult times as well as pleasant ones."

MARCEL DESAILLY
Close friends and apprentices at Nantes, they broke into the first team around the same time and went on to enjoy considerable success together, notably Marseille's 1993 Champions League victory and world and European titles with France in 1998 and 2000. When Desailly's half-brother Seth Adonkor was killed in a car crash in 1984, it was the teenage Deschamps who broke the news to his friend.

RAYMOND GOETHALS
A coach renowned for his tactical cunning and iron-clad defensive organisation, Deschamps played for the Belgian at Bordeaux and Marseille.

MIROSLAV BLAZEVIC
The Croat had no hesitation in making the 19-year-old Deschamps his captain on becoming Nantes coach in 1988. He also moved his skipper from his usual defensive midfield role to that of sweeper.

Varane's opening goal and struck the second with the help of a blunder from keeper Fernando Muslera.

This meant a sixth World Cup semi-final for France, where they beat Belgium 1-0 thanks to Samuel Umtiti's header from a corner.

And so on to the Final against Croatia and ultimate glory.

Here Deschamps profited above all from the lessons of 2016, explaining: "Two years ago, losing the Euro Final was so, so painful. Looking back I realised we put too much emphasis on that specific match. So this time we tried to stay relaxed. The players knew why they were in the final, how they got there. It was just one more game."

The Final produced more goals in 90 minutes than any decider since Brazil beat Sweden 5-2 in 1958. France led through Mario Mandzukic's own goal, allowed Ivan Perisic an equaliser and then accelerated away in the second half with further strikes from Griezmann's VAR-assisted penalty, Pogba and Mbappe. Hugo Lloris, on his way to becoming the fourth winning keeper-captain, gifted Mandzukic the consolation of becoming the only player to score for both sides in a Final.

Reviewing the World Cup, from a French and tournament perspective, Deschamps said: "I was asked several times: 'Are France beautiful champions?' Well, we are on top of the world for the next four years, so that what's important to remember. We didn't do everything right but we had the mental qualities which were decisive for a World Cup in which we saw that even teams who had the best technical skills did not have enough other qualities.

"I have never experienced a World Cup with such level standards, when the small teams arrived well prepared and with defensive systems which were easier to put together than offensive systems but that could hurt you. So I don't know if it was a beautiful World Cup but it was very tough athletically and intense mentally."

Victory in Moscow meant personal history for Deschamps as only the third man to have won the World Cup as a player and a coach, after Germany's Franz Beckenbauer and Brazil's Mario Zagallo. Beckenbauer texted Deschamps after the Final, saying: "Welcome to the club of the three!"

Boost...Antoine Greizmann gets the better of Lionel Messi

As ever, Deschamps kept his feet on the ground, revealing: "It won't change my life but I am very proud of this. I should invite Franz and Mario Zagallo to dinner though I don't know which language we would talk!

"As coaches, we have lived the same victory, though both of them were much better technically than me out on the pitch. But my personal pride is secondary – I am much happier to have seen the happiness of my players.

"We won our second champions' star with 14 players who were at a World Cup for the first time. Eleven of our 14 goals were scored in the knockout phase, four in the Final.

"I'm proud to have put together a group which hurt their opponents so often with 'surgical efficiency' as [assistant] Guy Stephan called it.

"It will take time before they realise what has happened to them. Kylian Mbappe is only 19 and I hope he will be a world champion again but one never knows. Twenty years ago David Trezeguet and Thierry Henry were only 19 but they never won the World Cup again.

"These players now, wherever they go, whatever happens to them in life, they will be linked together forever.

"They will never be the same again because now they will always have been world champions and – with respect to all the other titles – there is nothing in football above that." WS

Champions league fixtures

GROUP A

18 SEP	Club Brugge v Borussia Dortmund
18 SEP	Monaco v Atletico Madrid
3 OCT	Atletico Madrid v Club Brugge
3 OCT	Borussia Dortmund v Monaco
24 OCT	Club Brugge v Monaco
24 OCT	Borussia Dortmund v Atletico Madrid
6 NOV	Monaco v Club Brugge
6 NOV	Atletico Madrid v Borussia Dortmund
28 NOV	Atletico Madrid v Monaco
28 NOV	Borussia Dortmund v Club Brugge
11 DEC	Club Brugge v Atletico Madrid
11 DEC	Monaco v Borussia Dortmund

GROUP B

18 SEP	Barcelona v PSV
18 SEP	Internazionale v Tottenham Hotspur
3 OCT	Tottenham Hotspur v Barcelona
3 OCT	PSV v Internazionale
24 OCT	PSV v Tottenham Hotspur
24 OCT	Barcelona v Internazionale
6 NOV	Tottenham Hotspur v PSV
6 NOV	Internazionale v Barcelona
28 NOV	PSV v Barcelona
28 NOV	Tottenham Hotspur v Internazionale
11 DEC	Barcelona v Tottenham Hotspur
11 DEC	Internazionale v PSV

Re-match...Georginio Wijnaldum (far right) scores for Liverpool in an August friendly against Napoli

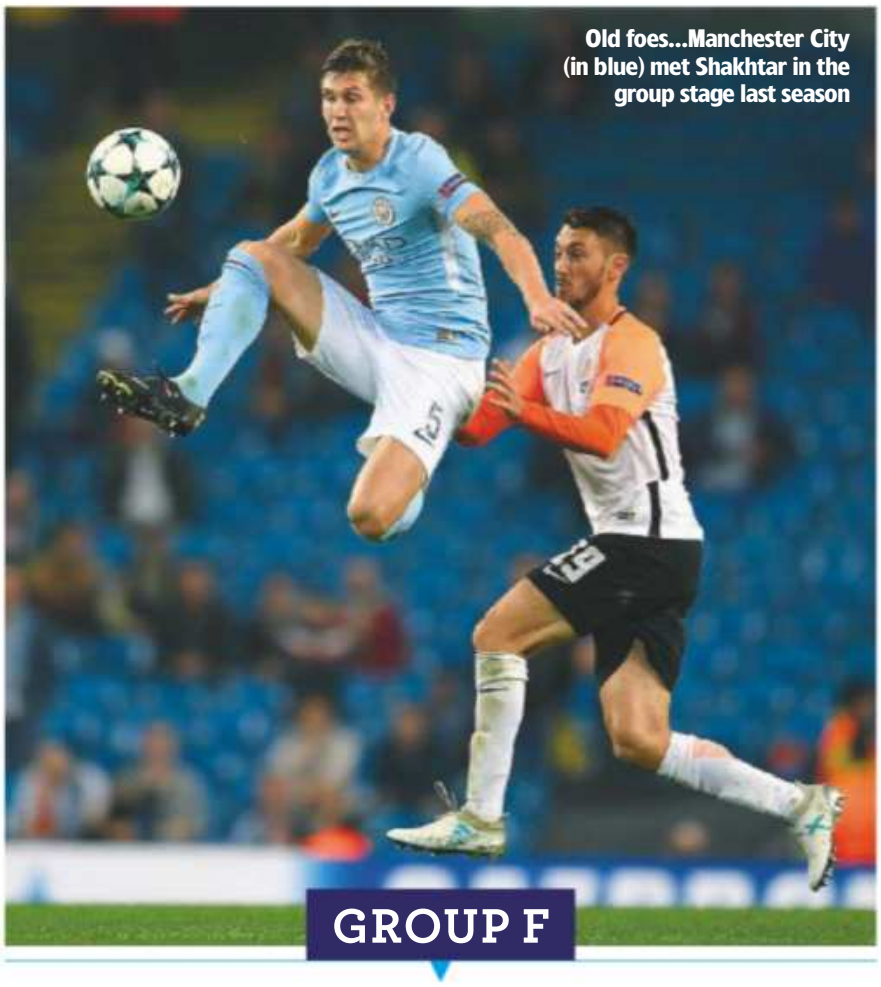
GROUP C

18 SEP	Liverpool v Paris Saint-Germain
18 SEP	Red Star Belgrade v Napoli
3 OCT	Paris Saint-Germain v Red Star Belgrade
3 OCT	Napoli v Liverpool
24 OCT	Paris Saint-Germain v Napoli
24 OCT	Liverpool v Red Star Belgrade
6 NOV	Red Star Belgrade v Liverpool
6 NOV	Napoli v Paris Saint-Germain
28 NOV	Paris Saint-Germain v Liverpool
28 NOV	Napoli v Red Star Belgrade
11 DEC	Liverpool v Napoli
11 DEC	Red Star Belgrade v Paris Saint-Germain

GROUP D

18 SEP	Galatasaray v Lokomotiv Moscow
18 SEP	Schalke v Porto
3 OCT	Lokomotiv Moscow v Schalke
3 OCT	Porto v Galatasaray
24 OCT	Lokomotiv Moscow v Porto
24 OCT	Galatasaray v Schalke
6 NOV	Porto v Lokomotiv Moscow
6 NOV	Schalke v Galatasaray
28 NOV	Lokomotiv Moscow v Galatasaray
28 NOV	Porto v Schalke
11 DEC	Galatasaray v Porto
11 DEC	Schalke v Lokomotiv Moscow

On top...Bayern Munich start their campaign in Portugal

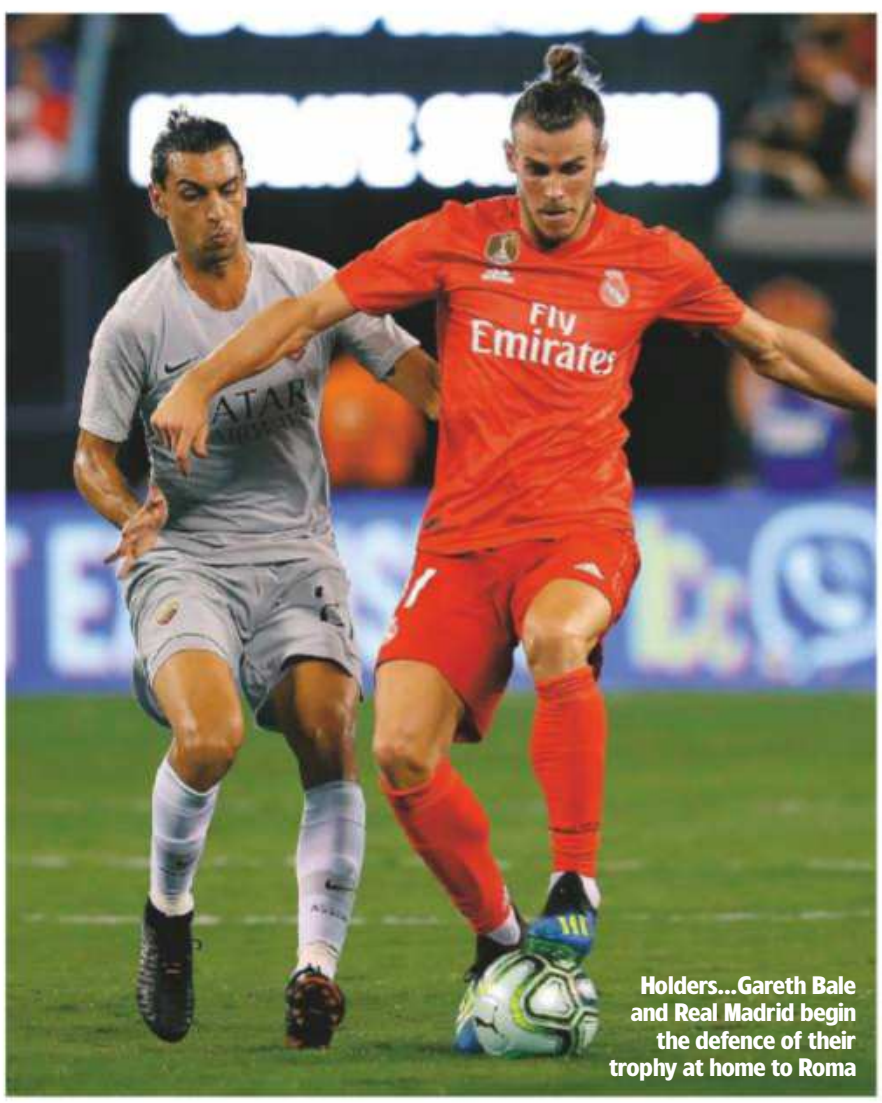

Old foes...Manchester City (in blue) met Shakhtar in the group stage last season

GROUP E

19 SEP	Ajax **v** AEK Athens
19 SEP	Benfica **v** Bayern Munich
2 OCT	Bayern Munich **v** Ajax
2 OCT	AEK Athens **v** Benfica
23 OCT	AEK Athens **v** Bayern Munich
23 OCT	Ajax **v** Benfica
7 NOV	Bayern Munich **v** AEK Athens
7 NOV	Benfica **v** Ajax
27 NOV	AEK Athen **v** Ajax
27 NOV	Bayern Munich **v** Benfica
12 DEC	Ajax **v** Bayern Munich
12 DEC	Benfica **v** AEK Athens

GROUP F

19 SEP	Shakhtar Donetsk **v** Hoffenheim
19 SEP	Manchester City **v** Lyon
2 OCT	Hoffenheim **v** Manchester City
2 OCT	Lyon **v** Shakhtar Donetsk
23 OCT	Hoffenheim **v** Lyon
23 OCT	Shakhtar Donetsk **v** Manchester City
7 NOV	Lyon **v** Hoffenheim
7 NOV	Manchester City **v** Shakhtar Donetsk
27 NOV	Hoffenheim **v** Shakhtar Donetsk
27 NOV	Lyon **v** Manchester City
12 DEC	Shakhtar Donetsk **v** Lyon
12 DEC	Manchester City **v** Hoffenheim



Holders...Gareth Bale and Real Madrid begin the defence of their trophy at home to Roma

GROUP G

19 SEP	Real Madrid **v** Roma
19 SEP	Viktoria Plzen **v** CSKA Moscow
2 OCT	CSKA Moscow **v** Real Madrid
2 OCT	Roma **v** Viktoria Plzen
23 OCT	Roma **v** CSKA Moscow
23 OCT	Real Madrid **v** Viktoria Plzen
7 NOV	CSKA Moscow **v** Roma
7 NOV	Viktoria Plzen **v** Real Madrid
27 NOV	CSKA Moscow **v** Viktoria Plzen
27 NOV	Roma **v** Real Madrid
12 DEC	Real Madrid **v** CSKA Moscow
12 DEC	Viktoria Plzen **v** Roma

GROUP H

19 SEP	Young Boys **v** Manchester United
19 SEP	Valencia **v** Juventus
2 OCT	Juventus **v** Young Boys
2 OCT	Manchester United **v** Valencia
23 OCT	Young Boys **v** Valencia
23 OCT	Manchester United **v** Juventus
7 NOV	Valencia **v** Young Boys
7 NOV	Juventus **v** Manchester United
27 NOV	Manchester United **v** Young Boys
27 NOV	Juventus **v** Valencia
12 DEC	Young Boys **v** Juventus
12 DEC	Valencia **v** Manchester United

The favourites

MANCHESTER CITY

Time to make their mark in Europe

After strolling to the Premier League title last season, playing some of the most sophisticated football ever seen in the English top flight, City will inevitably have an eye on the Champions League prize. Their Abu Dhabi owners have not pumped in petrodollars galore to be Euro also-rans – and that is what City have been in recent years, only once making the semi-finals in seven attempts.

Although Pep Guardiola would never admit it, he is in need of a continental coronation. Since overseeing Barcelona's win against Manchester United in the 2011 Final he has enjoyed precious little European fortune, losing no fewer than four semis and twice coming up short with City, who were eliminated in the round of 16 by Monaco in 2017 and only went one stage further last time out.

That quarter-final defeat by Liverpool left Guardiola with plenty of food for thought. In the 3-0 first-leg humbling at Anfield his side were completely blown away, unable to resist their opponents' intensity and aggression. With that template for beating City now established, it's up to Guardiola to find a remedy.

Guile...Riyad Mahrez (right)

Personnel-wise, City appear to have even more top-quality options this term.

Following several abortive attempts to leave Leicester City, winger Riyad Mahrez finally got his dream move to the Etihad Stadium, while French left-back Benjamin Mendy – who missed most of last season with damaged cruciate ligaments – is now fully recovered, primed and ready to maraud down the flank again.

COACH

Pep Guardiola
Coaching royalty, guiding Barcelona to Champions League glory in 2009 and 2011.

KEY MAN

Kevin De Bruyne
Supreme playmaker, but any prolonged absence after injuring his right knee in August would be a big loss.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH

Phil Foden
Local attacking midfielder who does not owe his squad number to window dressing. A complete package of creativity and flawless technique.

Why did City pay £60m for Mahrez?

Essentially, three reasons: his incisiveness in one-on-one situations, an eye for a killer pass and the ability to play either right, left or through the middle. City are experts at stretching the opposition and the Algerian has the guile and speed to take full advantage.

Where is City's soft spot?

As Liverpool proved more than once last season, City are not comfortable when subjected to a ferocious high press. The central defenders all have question marks against them: Vincent Kompany is never far from an injury lay-off, John Stones is prone to lapses in concentration, Nicolas Otamendi lacks composure and Aymeric Laporte is not as robust as he should be.

Who can be the breakout performer?

After a stop-start first season, Portuguese attacking midfielder Bernardo Silva began this campaign in impressive form. Sharp, clever and imaginative, he should start many more games in the months ahead.

PARIS SAINT-GERMAIN

New boss has to deliver immediately

Thomas Tuchel knows exactly what is expected of him in the French capital, with the only goal that really counts being a vast improvement in Champions League results and standing.

Ever since the investment arm of the Qatari government took control in 2011, PSG have failed to go beyond the quarter-finals, and for paymasters who have invested over €1bn in players that is not remotely good enough.

A disciple of Pep Guardiola's free-flowing, possession-based style of play, Tuchel is one of Europe's shrewdest tacticians and an expert shuffler of the pack. However, he can be a control freak – a trait which could put him at odds with PSG's squad of Hollywood headliners.

Needless to say he will have to tread especially carefully with in-house diva Neymar. The attacking maverick can be hard to handle at the best of times and rumours abound of an impending divorce. Neymar is said to be unhappy with the technical level in France, while many PSG fans have yet to warm to him, accusing him of egocentric excesses.

Diva...Neymar

After a disappointing World Cup that was marked by complaints of diving, the 26-year-old will need picking up. But if he can shrug off his blues then PSG will be all the stronger for it.

When fit, firing and not trying too hard, Neymar can be unstoppable, but PSG's new coach is not keen on selfish players and will only want the Brazilian to produce his magic where it matters, rather than dropping deep to become the playmaker.

COACH

Thomas Tuchel
Was heavily linked with Bayern Munich earlier this year, only for the German champions to dither and PSG to pounce.

KEY MAN

Kylian Mbappe
Fresh from his World Cup exploits, the Paris-born teen is now talking about winning the Champions League.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH

Presnel Kimpembe
A member of France's World Cup squad, the centre-back will be confident of a permanent first-team spot.

Which tactical template is Tuchel likely to favour?

Probably an attack-minded 4-2-3-1 built on synchronised positional play, sharp movement off the ball and explosive pace out wide. Obsessed with flexibility, Tuchel is renowned for constantly changing his team's shape during games.

How determined is Tuchel to be a success at PSG ?

Let's just say the German is leaving nothing to chance, even going so far as to personally check out the players' favourite restaurants and nightclubs. He has also been running the rule over the dietary intake of every member of his squad.

Was it wise to recruit Gigi Buffon?

Only time will tell. Yes, the 40-year-old former Juventus and Italy keeper is a serial winner, but does he still have the athleticism? And he must also serve a three-match European ban for his anti-authority outburst after Juve lost to Real Madrid in last season's quarter-final.

REAL MADRID

Aiming for four in a row

Team work...Real Madrid's Sergio Ramos and Casemiro get the better of Atletico Madrid's Diego Costa

COACH

Julen Lopetegui
Was sensationally sacked as Spain boss on the eve of this summer's World Cup for negotiating with Real behind the federation's back.

KEY MAN

Toni Kroos
The German midfield metronome is in a league of his own when it comes to vision, accuracy of pass and an ability to dictate the tempo.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH

Vinicius Junior
Brazilian attacking starlet recently brought in for €45m from Flamengo.

With a cast of world-beaters at their disposal, a happy knack of keeping their heads in tight spots and also being able to deliver when collectively below par, Real have every reason to believe a fourth straight Champions League is a realistic objective. Their biggest problem is they are in the middle of a transition period with a changing of the old guard.

Following the resignation in late May of Zinedine Zidane, his successor Julen Lopetegui has big coaching boots to fill. And just to make his job even harder he will have to do without Cristiano Ronaldo, who left for Juventus.

There's much to be said for the argument that Ronaldo's departure leaves a void which cannot be filled. During nine glorious seasons at the Bernabeu he was their Champions League life-insurance policy, scoring 101 goals.

However, Lopetegui and Real should be a good philosophical fit. He favours a stylish and expansive attacking game, with

Upgrade... Thibaut Courtois

an approach that is based on slick circulation of the ball and plenty of directness. His side is likely to play with far more science and substance than Real teams of the past few seasons, putting greater emphasis on teamwork, increased tactical flexibility and a high press.

What sort of impact can be expected from Real's summer signings?

Thibaut Courtois represents a major upgrade in goal, while right-back Alvaro Odriozola looks set for an intense battle for a starting slot with Dani Carvajal. Highly impressive in pre-season, 18-year-old Vinicius Junior could turn out to be a very useful impact sub.

What is the key to Lopetegui's management style?

Communication. A believer in honest exchanges with all members of the squad, not just the first-team seniors, he has already worked with many of Real's players during his time in charge of various Spanish representative sides.

Is there a surprise up his sleeve?

Now that Ronaldo is history, Lopetegui may be tempted to employ a "false nine", with versatile Marco Asensio fitting that hybrid bill perfectly.

The heavyweights

ATLETICO MADRID

A team built in the image of their boss

Despite their beloved *Colchoneros* failing to qualify for the knockout stage of last season's Champions League, no Atletico fan would dream of aiming a single word of criticism at Diego Simeone. For those of the red-and-white-striped faith, *El Cholo* is the man they owe everything to, the gritty street fighter who has turned them into a European powerhouse.

That Atletico have enjoyed so much continental success in recent times – silver medals in the 2014 and 2016 Champions Leagues, the Europa League crown in May and victory over city rivals Real in August's UEFA Super Cup – is entirely down to the state of mind that Simeone has cultivated for the past seven years, with a love of the art of defending, solidarity and grind-it-out character.

Possession stats count for little here. Never happier than when sitting back and soaking up pressure, Simeone's side generally tend to prevail on scraps with either a devastating counter-attack or a well-rehearsed set-piece.

Of vital importance is the cutting edge represented by front-line stars Diego Costa and Griezmann. Target man Costa is all power, presence and niggling gamesmanship, while Griezmann is his subtle, elusive and quick-witted partner. Rumoured to be on the verge of a move to Barcelona this summer, Griezmann opted to stay where he was, making his announcement in a TV documentary for which two different endings were filmed.

Victorious...after beating Real in the UEFA Super Cup

COACH
Diego Simeone
Hard-nosed Argentinian boss whose will to win knows no bounds.

KEY MAN
Antoine Griezmann
With their will-of-the-wisp French technician floating around the attacking third, Atletico always have a chance.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH
Lucas Hernandez
Ever-reliable left-back or central defender who was a World Cup winner with *Les Bleus* this summer.

Which area did Atletico pay particular attention to in the summer window?
A priority was high-quality wingers, with deals struck for Thomas Lemar and Gelson Martins. There was, however, quite a difference in price, with Monaco's Lemar costing €65m and Martins arriving for nothing after he was set free from his contractual ties following an assault on Sporting's players by their own fans.

Will they miss Sime Vrsaljko, who has joined Internazionale?
While the Croatia right-back did well at the World Cup, he struggled in his two seasons with Atletico, often injured and inconsistent when in continental action.

Do they have enough dressing-room leaders now that Gabi and Fernando Torres have left?
It should not be a problem. Simeone is only interested in teak-tough players and has no room for the weak-willed or the ill-disciplined. As Lucas Hernandez says: "Atletico is an attitude."

BARCELONA

As usual, it's all about Messi

Five months since their loss to Roma in last term's quarter-finals – offering next to no resistance when folding 3-0 in the second-leg in Italy – Barcelona fans will be praying that Ernesto Valverde has learnt his lesson. Last season he only rotated his first-team personnel sparingly and, as winter turned to spring, fatigue kicked in, leaving his side with little left in the tank for the run-in.

The times are most definitely changing at Camp Nou. After 21 years at the club, Andres Iniesta now plays for Japanese outfit Vissel Kobe – and how his unique ability to probe, move and pass will be missed. While there may never be another quite like him, Barca have found themselves a fine prospect in Arthur, who arrived in a €40m deal from Gremio. Renowned for his easy technique, game awareness and incisive distribution, the 22-year-old Brazilian should link seamlessly with the likes of Lionel Messi and Luis Suarez.

At a club that has made its fair share of recruitment errors of late, new technical secretary Eric Abidal deserves praise for his headhunting efforts this summer.

Signing Bayern Munich's Chilean midfielder Arturo Vidal for just €18m was a coup in every sense, and Abidal displayed similar ruthlessness when outbidding Roma for Bordeaux winger Malcom. The 23-year-old French centre-back Clement Lenglet, lured away from Sevilla, is another excellent buy.

Skipper... Lionel Messi

COACH
Ernesto Valverde
Former Camp Nou winger who coached Espanyol to the UEFA Cup Final in 2007.

KEY MAN
Lionel Messi
The side's in-house genius and new club captain.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH
Malcom
Much-coveted Brazilian winger who was snapped up from Bordeaux in the close season for €41m.

Does Valverde have the tactical nous to prosper at the highest level?
The evidence of last season would suggest not. Nearly always using 4-4-2, he put the emphasis on defensive shape and keeping his fingers crossed that Messi would weave his magic. Flexibility was in short supply at times.

Three wishes for Valverde ?
A fully-fit and energised Messi, a defence that cannot be bullied, and more attacking output. Last season they managed just 17 goals in 10 Champions League games – which is a poor return for a team of their attacking gifts.

Which La Masia graduates could make an impact this season?
Insiders believe that impish schemer Riqui Puig could be next to make the breakthrough. Others on the verge of the first team are left-back Juan Miranda and midfielder Carles Alena, though the latter will be out of action until the autumn with a hamstring injury.

BAYERN MUNICH

A record to be proud of

Summer rest...Germany's early World Cup exit could actually benefit players such as Thomas Muller

COACH

Niko Kovac
A hyperactive midfielder for Bayern in the early noughties, the Berlin-born Croat was handed his dream job this summer.

KEY MAN

Mats Hummels
Back-line fulcrum and a key voice in the dressing room.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH

Leon Goretzka
Exceptional midfielder about to begin his first season with the German champions after joining from Schalke.

For the past seven years Bayern have been the epitome of Champions League consistency, winning the trophy in 2013, runners-up the previous year and making the semi-finals on no fewer than six occasions. It's a record most clubs would die for – and with a little more luck they might have achieved even more.

Looking to keep up the good European work, Bayern will be hoping new boss Niko Kovac hits the ground running and that the squad promptly buys into his methods. Previously with Croatia and then Eintracht Frankfurt, Kovac has not worked at a powerhouse club before and has zero experience of the Champions League.

Not an advocate of possession for possession's sake, his tactics usually revolve around directness, pace and solid defensive organisation. One of his strong suits is choreographing counter-attacks – and that is an avenue which could reap rich rewards in Europe.

Germany's early exit from the World Cup could also turn out to be a blessing in disguise, with the likes of Mats Hummels, Joshua Kimmich, Manuel Neuer and Thomas Muller all benefitting from extra summer rest and recuperation.

Goals...Robert Lewandowski

Can Robert Lewandowski find his Champions League shooting boots?

So prolific in the Bundesliga, the Polish striker has tended to go missing at the business end of the Champions League, only managing two goals in the quarter-finals and beyond in three seasons. Those numbers must be improved upon.

Who are Bayern lining up to replace veteran wingers Franck Ribery and Arjen Robben?

Expect considerably more game time to be given to the impressive Serge Gnabry, who was on loan at Hoffenheim last term, and Kingsley Coman.

Would Kovac be swiftly ditched if results are not satisfactory?

Bayern's recent record of nine different managerial tenures in the last decade says yes. But, crucially for Kovac, Bayern president Uli Hoeness is an unconditional supporter, having said "I'm the happiest man in the world with Niko Kovac as our coach" during the close season.

The heavyweights

JUVENTUS

Ronaldo fuels dream

No club in Europe is in a more euphoric state at the moment than Juventus, with the €100m signing this summer of Cristiano Ronaldo, the highest-profile player in the world, sending the entire Juve nation wild with anticipation and dreaming of a first Champions League title since 1996.

The club has an excellent recent track record in UEFA's flagship competition and two runners-up spots in the past three years say everything about their strength at the very highest level. And under coach Massimiliano Allegri they have proved the ultimate Euro fighters, being opportunistic, resilient and so difficult to kill off.

Ronaldo and Juventus are two voraciously ambitious institutions with a common cause: Juve are desperate to return to the European summit and bag their third Champions' Cup/Champions League crown, while Ronaldo craves bigger and better numbers in the same arena. With a sixth winner's medal, he would join Real Madrid legend Gento as the most successful player in the history of the tournament and will become only the second individual – after Clarence Seedorf – to win the trophy with three different clubs: Manchester United, Real and Juventus.

Waiting... Mattia Perin

But the Italians have fortified their squad in other areas, too.

Portuguese international Joao Cancelo, a €40m acquisition from Valencia, is a promising attack-minded full-back; former Liverpool midfielder Emre Can, judiciously snapped up on a free transfer, will add versatility and know-how to the engine room; and outstanding centre-back Leonardo Bonucci has opted for a back-to-the-future switch, only too happy to return to the *Bianconeri* after a disappointing one-season hiatus at Milan.

COACH
Massimiliano Allegri
Has a great European record with Juventus, with only two Champions League knockout phase – non Final – defeats in four years.

KEY MAN
Cristiano Ronaldo
Mr Champions League, he is the competition's all-time top scorer with 120 goals.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH
Rodrigo Bentancur
Classy Uruguayan puller of the midfield strings.

Dream signing... Cristiano Ronaldo

How is Allegri likely to set up the side tactically in Europe?

The Juve coach insists he will not have a base formation etched in stone, preferring to mix and match the set-up according to circumstances. However, four templates stand out: an ultra-attacking 4-3-3 with Paulo Dybala and Mario Mandzukic up front; the tried and tested 4-2-3-1; a 4-1-4-1; or a 3-5-2. Allegri will be aiming to keep Ronaldo and the brilliant Dybala in close proximity.

Who replaces Gigi Buffon in goal?

Polish international Wojciech Szczesny will step into the breach but he must cut out the unforced errors which have plagued his career. Failure to do so could see new signing Mattia Perin move up the pecking order.

Is an ageing back line a problem?

All of their top centre-backs – Giorgio Chiellini, Andrea Barzagli, Bonucci and Mehdi Benatia – are 31 or over, which means huge amounts of experience but some creaking legs. Many fans were unhappy that Mattia Caldara left for Milan as a bargaining chip in the Bonucci deal.

LIVERPOOL

Big investment brings added pressure

Jurgen Klopp might not have the best of records in European Finals, having been beaten in three out of three at the helm of Borussia Dortmund and Liverpool, but he is quite clearly building something very special at Anfield.

In last season's Champions League Final, which was their first appearance in the showpiece in 11 years, the Reds were more than a little unfortunate to lose to Real Madrid – when they were essentially undone by goalkeeping gaffes – and they have certainly strengthened in the transfer market this summer.

Splashing out some £164m on new faces, Klopp has addressed many of the team's long-standing issues. Brazil number one Alisson, prised away from Roma, is one of the best in the world in his position, and they have enhanced their midfield depth with the arrival of box-to-box ace Naby Keita and Brazilian utility man Fabinho. Meanwhile, bullish Swiss wide-man Xherdan Shaqiri will give the side even more options in the attacking third.

The manager's European game plan will be a carbon copy of the one he rolls out every week in the Premier League, combining a combustible blend of high energy, intense pressing and straight-for-the-jugular attacking play.

As for the biggest weapons in their armoury, it remains a toss-up between the magnificent front-line trident formed by Roberto Firmino, Sadio Mane and Mohamed Salah, and the din stoked up at Anfield on a European night.

One of the best...Alisson

MANAGER
Jurgen Klopp
Liverpool's most charismatic boss since Bill Shankly ruled the Anfield roost in the 1960s and 70s.

KEY MAN
Mohamed Salah
Remarkable Egyptian speedster, ball-manipulator and marksman.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH
Naby Keita
All-singing, all-dancing Guinean midfield ace, bought for £52.75m from RB Leipzig.

Is the arrival of Alisson the final piece in the back-line jigsaw?

While the Brazilian is undoubtedly a vast improvement on Loris Karius and Simon Mignolet, on the whole the Reds' rearguard remains a work in progress. Croat stopper Dejan Lovren still has an unfortunate capacity for mistakes, while full-backs Trent Alexander-Arnold and Andrew Robertson – although impressive when going forward – can be defensively naive at times.

Will the increased expectations take a toll?

As a result of their appearance in the Final last season, and the summer spending spree, Klopp will be under far more pressure to deliver. Much of his motivational shtick has centred on playing the underdog, but that no longer applies and Liverpool are now there to be shot at.

How much of a blow was the failure to clinch a deal for Lyon and France playmaker Nabil Fekir?

Fekir would have been a sensation with his touch, imagination and sharpness. To compensate, Klopp might push the highly inventive Keita further forward.

MANCHESTER UNITED

Mourinho unhappy with recruitment

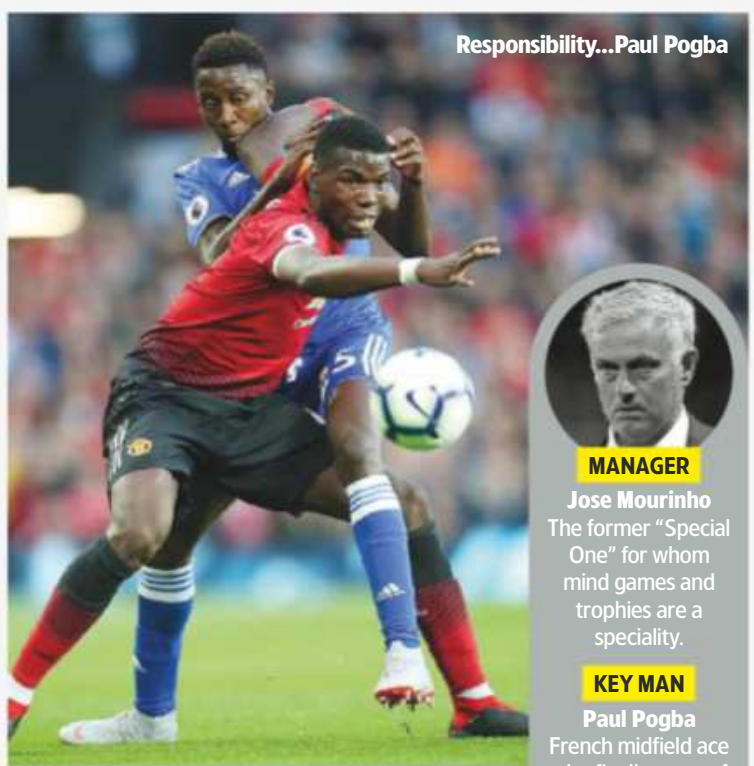
On the face to it, United should be genuine contenders. They have the superstar names in Paul Pogba, Alexis Sanchez, David De Gea and Romelu Lukaku; a marquee manager in Jose Mourinho, who has won the Champions League with Porto and Internazionale; and they have an outstanding honours board in the competition, having been winners three times, runners-up twice and semi-finalists on seven occasions.

So why all the negativity which seems to be engulfing the club right now?

One reason is their distinct lack of Premier League success in the post Alex Ferguson era and the seeping away of their once iron-clad self-belief.

The other root cause is their poor attacking play of recent times, with David Moyes, Louis Van Gaal and now Mourinho all failing to produce the sort of fast, fluid and positive football that the Old Trafford faithful crave.

Nor is Mourinho exactly a picture of contentment. Throughout pre-season he constantly complained about the club's transfer activity, claiming that he had submitted a wish-list of five players for one specific position – thought to be centre-back – of which none have been signed. In the end, United only brought in two players during the window: Brazilian midfielder Fred from Shakhtar Donetsk and teenage Portuguese right-back Diogo Dalot from Porto.



Responsibility...Paul Pogba

MANAGER
Jose Mourinho
The former "Special One" for whom mind games and trophies are a speciality.

KEY MAN
Paul Pogba
French midfield ace who finally came of age at Russia 2018.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH
Andreas Pereira
Mature and enterprising defensive midfielder, Belgian-born of Brazilian lineage.

Was it wise to make Pogba captain?

So inconsistent for United since returning to Old Trafford a couple of years ago, the French midfielder might just respond to the added responsibility. At this summer's World Cup in Russia he displayed a more mature, hard-working side to his game. As his national team-mate Adil Rami said: "Paul was the man we all looked to. He carried us at important moments. He became a real leader."

Just how secure is Mourinho in the United hot-seat ?

It all depends on Premier League points and Champions League progress, but whatever happens his power base does appear to be shrinking. By rejecting his recruitment shortlist the Old Trafford powers that be effectively told the Portuguese that they did not trust his judgement. That cannot augur well for the future.

Does the side have a fault line in central defence?

Mourinho certainly thinks so. If he didn't, he would not have been advocating major surgery in this sector. With no new reinforcements it is now up to the likes of Eric Bailly, Phil Jones, Chris Smalling and Victor Lindelof to prove their boss wrong.

Dark horses

BORUSSIA DORTMUND

Back to basics

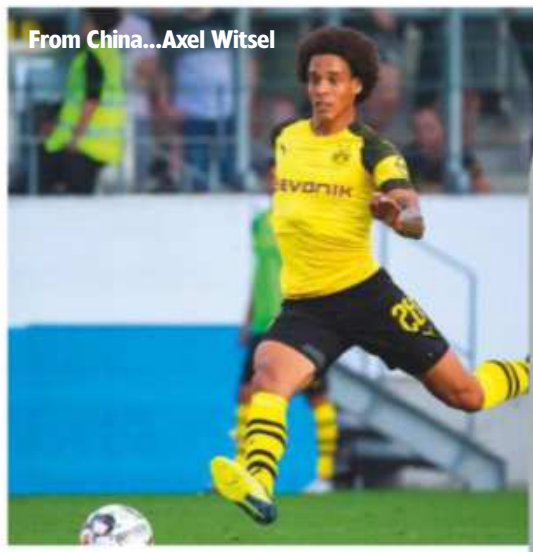
Following a season in which little went right – failing to win a game in their Champions League group, unexpectedly falling to Red Bull Salzburg in the Europa League and only making the Bundesliga top four on goal difference – the Westfalenstadion powers-that-be are promising a back-to-basics relaunch.

According to chief executive Hans-Joachim Watzke, the club as a whole has neglected its blue-collar identity and has been particularly guilty of preferring technical players over leaders and battlers.

It remains to be seen whether an injection of grit will make a substantial difference, but they have clearly manoeuvred intelligently in the transfer market, bringing in France under-21 centre-back Abdou Diallo from Mainz, all-action wide-man Marius Wolf from Eintracht Frankfurt, Augsburg's Swiss keeper Marwin Hitz and a pair of fine holding midfielders in Denmark's Thomas Delaney from Werder Bremen and the Belgium international Axel Witsel from China's Tianjin Quanjian.

After the disastrous technical-area reigns last term of Peter Bosz and Peter Stoger, the *Dortmunder* also appear to have struck gold with the appointment of Swiss coach Lucien Favre. Methodical, meticulous and tactically very switched on, he is widely respected in German football circles and if anyone can make a good fist of this major reconstruction project it is "Lulu".

The club's fourth boss in a little over a year, Favre will hope to bring some much needed stability and expertise.


From China...Axel Witsel

COACH
Lucien Favre
Previously in charge of Hertha Berlin, Borussia Monchengladbach and Nice, and was Germany's coach of the year three times.

KEY MAN
Marco Reus
Equally effective as a wide man or second striker.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH
Jadon Sancho
Precocious teenage winger who quit Manchester City for the Ruhr on transfer deadline day last year.

What are the nuts and bolts of Favre's style of play?

He stands for quick, direct football, with a premium on short, snappy passes and structured approach work. Throughout his coaching career he has constantly preached the need for counter-attacking excellence, stating that "a team that can't counter is not a great team". He likes a compact shape and a high defensive line, with a 4-3-3 system the most likely.

For which Dortmund player is this season especially important?

Germany's match-winner in the 2014 World Cup Final, attacking midfielder or false-nine Mario Gotze faces a huge test of his mettle. Since that glorious night in Rio, illness and a loss of form have taken their toll and he was not even selected for Russia 2018. Still only 26, he has time to turn it around.

Who will skipper Dortmund?

The coach has handed the armband to German international attacking midfielder Marco Reus, a player who used to work under him at Gladbach.

INTERNAZIONALE

Consistency will be key

Back in the Champions League for the first time in seven years, the *Nerazzurri* very nearly did not make the cut, only punching their ticket on the final weekend of the season when coming from behind to snatch a dramatic 3-2 win at Lazio.

In an explosive press conference at the end of the campaign, coach Luciano Spalletti complained that the club's Chinese owners had not given him the players he wanted, saying: "Promises were made and not kept. We can't take the fans for a ride." He also described Inter's activity in the 2017 marketplace as "a ham-fisted reshuffle".

Presumably Spalletti is far happier this summer following the retention of star striker Mauro Icardi and the marquee purchase of Belgian midfielder Radja Nainggolan, who was a €38m signing from Roma.

Also sweeping into the arrivals lounge were Ghanaian left-sided full-back or midfielder Kwadwo Asamoah, who was acquired on a free from Juventus, Lazio's out-of-contract Dutch international centre-back Stefan De Vrij, Croat right-back Sime Vrsaljko from Atletico Madrid and Lautaro Martinez, a €22m buy from Argentinian outfit Racing.

Real target...Mauro Icardi

COACH
Luciano Spalletti
Inter's ninth boss since Jose Mourinho left in 2010.

KEY MAN
Mauro Icardi
Gutsy Argentinian striker who was linked with Real Madrid in the summer.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH
Lautaro Martinez
Exciting Argentinian centre-forward known as "The Bull".

Were Inter ever really in with a chance of sealing a deal this summer for Real Madrid's midfield maestro Luka Modric?

The Croat superstar was apparently very keen on a switch to San Siro and pushed hard to make it happen, but with Real president Florentino Perez refusing to budge an inch the move was, in truth, a non-starter from the off.

What will be key for a successful European campaign?

Consistency. Inter have an unfortunate tendency of late to take their eye off the ball and to swiftly go from sensational to slipshod. They seem to suffer a barren period every season and must hope that is not the case this autumn.

Who is Inter's secret weapon?

Often underrated, Croatia's Marcelo Brozovic is a deep-lying *regista* and protector of the back-line.

LYON

Relying on youth

Third in Ligue 1 last term and one of the best clubs in Europe for giving a chance to young talent, Lyon are about to begin their 22nd consecutive season in continental action.

Their straight-talking, controversial president Jean-Michel Aulas has set his sights on at least a place in the knockout phase, although that will be anything but easy as Lyon have not gone as far in the Champions League since 2012.

They do have their issues, however. Much criticised last term by fans and the media for alleged technical-area passivity and a lack of authority, coach Bruno Genesio is very much in the last-chance saloon and there was an outcry this summer when two of their most promising youngsters were allowed to leave, with teen sensation winger Willem Geubbels joining Monaco and forward Myziane Maolida heading for Nice.

Joy...Martin Terrier (left) and Bertrand Traore

COACH

Bruno Genesio
A valued member of the OL back-room staff for a decade, he was appointed first-team boss in December 2015.

KEY MAN

Nabil Fekir
Club captain whose flair and creativity in the hole is absolutely crucial to the team's well-being.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH

Houssem Aouar
Elegant, technical and thoughtful midfielder who has every chance of becoming a full French international.

In which part of the field are Lyon likely to be strongest?

Without question OL's strength lies in their midfield, where their "baby triumvirate" of 20-year-old Houssem Aouar, and 21-year-olds Lucas Tousart and Tanguy Ndombele are growing up much faster than anyone could have expected. The trio have the skills and maturity – not to mention the potential – and compliment one another very well indeed.

Which facet of their game must OL look to improve?

While they can be devastating on the counter-attack Lyon are not remotely as comfortable when having to take the initiative themselves. As a collective unit they still have some way to go, and they tend to rely on bursts of individualism from Nabil Fekir and front-runners Memphis Depay and Bertrand Traore.

Describe the OL Class of 18-19 in three words?

Fearless, enthusiastic, youthful. The fact they have six French under-21 internationals in their ranks says it all.

MONACO

All change once again

Every season starts the same for Monaco as they sell their best, most marketable players, meaning that the job of Leonardo Jardim, according to the coach himself, is to "make omelettes with the eggs I'm given". Each season he dons his chef's hat, takes a group of new young recruits and successfully recreates a winning recipe.

In one fell swoop last summer he lost half his team – Kylian Mbappe, Bernardo Silva, Tiemoue Bakayoko, Valere Germain and Nabil Dirar – and it's been the same old story in pre-season once again this year, with Thomas Lemar, Fabinho, Joao Moutinho, Rachid Ghezzal and Adama Diakhaby all bidding farewell to the millionaires' paradise.

And so starts his next rebuilding project, trying to fuse a cadre of freshly arrived tyros into a collective worthy of the Champions League.

Of the club's latest batch of recruits, only former CSKA Moscow playmaker Aleksandr Golovin has played at this level before. For the likes of Sofiane Diop, wingers Willem Geubbels and Samuel Grandsir, defensive midfielder Jean-Eudes Aholou and full-backs Antonio Barreca and Ronael Pierre-Gabriel it will be an entirely new ball game.

New territory... Samuel Grandsir

COACH

Leonardo Jardim
Much-respected Portuguese strategist now in his fifth season at the Stade Louis II.

KEY MAN

Radamel Falcao
Evergreen Colombian striker with an enviable goalscoring record in European club competitions.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH

Sofiane Diop
Hugely gifted teenage midfielder brought in this summer from Rennes.

What is Jardim's tactical philosophy?

Whether he uses a 4-2-3-1 or 4-4-2, the various sectors of his team always seem to be connected by an invisible thread. In attack or defensively, everyone is intense, disciplined and harmonious. A key part of his strategy is the use of ever-adventurous full-backs to create overloads out wide.

What must Monaco do better in this season's Champions League?

Surprisingly for a coach who insists on meticulous defensive organisation, Monaco's back line was an open door in the competition last term and they conceded 16 goals in six fixtures. They must tighten up, and their centre-back pairing of Jemerson and Kamil Glik will have to be much more watchful and uncompromising in this campaign.

What would constitute a successful campaign for Monaco?

In the last two tournaments they have alternated between the sublime and the ridiculous, reaching the semi-finals in 2017 and finishing rock bottom and winless in the group phase last time out. A place in the last 16 will probably keep everyone in the principality satisfied.

Dark horses

NAPOLI

Serie A the priority

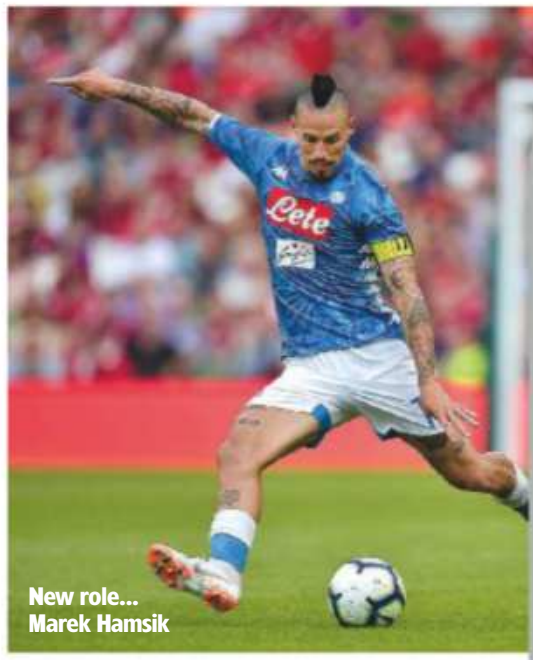
Larger-than-life Napoli owner Aurelio De Laurentiis made a loud and proud statement of intent when announcing in May that Carlo Ancelotti would be the club's new coach, stepping into the shoes of the Chelsea-bound Maurizio Sarri.

Apart from a spell at Juventus, the highly experienced "Carletto" has delivered trophies wherever he has worked, including the conquest of three Champions League titles: two with Milan and one with Real Madrid.

At first glance, Ancelotti and Napoli do not appear to be the most natural of bedfellows.

Sarri's Napoli were bold, progressive, perhaps even reckless at times, while Ancelotti is, above all else, a pragmatist – and one without an identifiable tactical signature. It will be interesting to see how this most relaxed and reserved of characters will cope in the volatile environment of the Stadio San Paolo, and what sort of relationship he will have with the ever-combustible De Laurentiis.

Italian daily *Corriere dello Sport* has claimed that Ancelotti's advisors tried to talk him out of taking the job and fans are unhappy with his appointment, but Laurentiis has backed the new boss, stating: "Those who doubt Ancelotti's ability don't understand anything. He's an absolute genius."



New role... Marek Hamsik

COACH
Carlo Ancelotti
The ultimate elite boss with a cv that includes stints at Juventus, Milan, Chelsea, PSG, Real Madrid and Bayern Munich.

KEY MAN
Dries Mertens
Belgian wing wizard turned prolific central striker, he is mercurial as well as devastating.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH
Fabian Ruiz
Spain under-21 midfielder signed for €30m from Real Betis.

Will Napoli prioritise Serie A over the Champions League this season?
Ancelotti has made it clear that the Italian championship is his prime objective. The club have not won the Serie A title since 1990 and they will be even more motivated after being in pole position for much of last season, only overhauled in the final furlongs by Juventus.

What's the lowdown on long-serving Slovak midfielder Marek Hamsik?
Demoted to the bench by Sarri last spring, Hamsik was toying with the idea of a move to China but has since ditched those plans. Ancelotti is talking about using him in a new role, that of deep-lying playmaker.

What other changes could Ancelotti have up his sleeve?
In a 4-3-2-1 or 4-2-3-1, he wants the Polish striker Arkadiusz Milik to lead the line. The plan is to play Dries Mertens much deeper, arriving late into the box.

PORTO

Gaps must be plugged

When push comes to shove, Porto's final grade in Europe will depend on how well they plug the gaps left by recent raids on their talent stockpile.

This summer no fewer than three of their most accomplished defenders left for pastures new: full-backs Ricardo Pereira and Diogo Dalot going to Leicester City and Manchester United respectively, while Spanish centre-back Ivan Marcano signed on the dotted line for Roma after four seasons of trusty service.

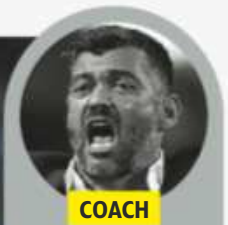
That's a lot of rearguard class to lose in one go, but the Portuguese champs do have a flair for regeneration and the signs are good that solutions will be found.

Uruguayan veteran Maxi Pereira is an able replacement for Pereira, homegrown 19-year-old stopper Diogo Leite looks to have a great future ahead of him, and as for new arrivals the versatile Congolese international Chancel Mbemba from Newcastle United and Brazilian full-backs Eder Militao and Joao Pedro should all feature in the rotation mix. Twenty-three-year-old former Portimonense midfielder Paulinho also has signed on.

One pressing problem is the controversy surrounding the Franco-Malian attacker Moussa Marega who scored 22 league goals last term.

After trying and failing to force through a move to the Premier League, a disgruntled Marega has been training on his own, a stand-off which helps neither party. "We will not give in to the pressure," declared Porto president Pinto Da Costa.

Bright future ...Diogo Leite



COACH
Sergio Conceicao
The mastermind of Porto's domestic league triumph last season – their first national crown in five years.

KEY MAN
Vincent Aboubakar
The Cameroon striker was Porto's top scorer in last season's Champions League campaign.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH
Marius Mouandilmadji
Sharp and athletic Chadian striker signed this summer from leading Cameroon club Coton Sport.

Will there be any changes to the way that coach Sergio Conceicao sets up his team this season?
The likelihood is that he will stick to his usual blueprint, either a 4-4-2 or 4-3-3, which is his platform for a high-tempo and aggressive power football.

Has the Marega affair damaged the team's unity, the "all for one, one for all" spirit which Conceicao has worked so hard to develop?
Quite the opposite. Indeed, it seems to have brought the squad closer together. This is one tight-knit group.

How important is veteran Spanish keeper Iker Casillas to the side on European nights?
No other player at the club can come close to the 37-year-old's CL experience, with 167 games in the competition and three winners' medals.

ROMA

Monchi makes a difference

Fresh from their triumphant qualification for the Champions League semi-finals last term – the club's best performance in Europe since coming runners-up in the 1984 European Cup – the *Giallorossi* are busy trying to build on those foundations.

Their sporting director Monchi, the ex-Sevilla talent-spotter extraordinaire, has been working his magic in the capital for over a year now – and what a difference he has made.

Monchi has been paying particular attention of late to the midfield area, allowing Belgian midfield warrior Radja Naninggolan to move for big money to Internazionale and more than compensating with a string of shrewd buys, not least French international midfielder Steven Nzonzi from Sevilla, Paris Saint-Germain's Argentinian creator Javier Pastore, Atalanta playmaker Bryan Cristante and promising Croat number 10 Ante Coric from Dinamo Zagreb.

There has been no penny-pinching at the Stadio Olimpico this year. In 2011, in Roma's first transfer window after being taken over by American financiers, the club spent €12m on midfielders. This summer, a total of €80m has been invested in the engine room alone.

That transfer kitty was boosted considerably by the €62.5m sale of keeper Alisson to Liverpool, and Monchi has also used the cash to recruit Ajax winger Justin Kluivert, Swedish World Cup keeper Robin Olsen from Copenhagen and Spanish centre-back Ivan Marcano, who was available for free after winding down his contract at Porto.

Decision... Robin Olsen

COACH
Eusebio Di Francesco
Former Italian international midfielder who came to prominence when qualifying provincial upstarts Sassuolo for the Europa League.

KEY MAN
Edin Dzeko
Revitalised Bosnian striker known as "The Diamond" in his homeland.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH
Cengiz Under
Turkish right-winger who has done a good job replacing Mo Salah.

Does the signing of Nzonzi automatically signal the end for Roma's long-serving defensive midfielder Daniele De Rossi?

De Rossi will not give up his place without a fight. He's been a first-teamer with the club for 15 seasons and, while 35 years of age, he is adamant he's not ready for retirement. That said, Nzonzi was not brought in to sit on the bench.

Where is Roma's Achilles heel?

In effect, they have two: a clear lack of pace at the back, with central defenders Kostas Manolas and Federico Fazio especially vulnerable to fleet-footed forwards and balls over the top; and a tendency to overdose on crosses in the direction of main striker Edin Dzeko, which can make them very predictable.

Is Olsen a certainty to succeed Alisson between the posts?

Not necessarily. Roma also recruited the highly experienced Bologna keeper Antonio Mirante and coach Eusebio Di Francesco faces a big call.

TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR

Same squad to go again

There are two ways of looking at Spurs' decision to make no new signings this summer – which was the first time a Premier League club had completely ignored a transfer window since the system came into being back in 2003.

Some see it as a symptom of complacency, a misguided assumption on the part of the club's board that, as long as they have a coach of the calibre of Mauricio Pochettino, a top-four Premier League place is guaranteed. Others take a more relaxed view, arguing that Spurs already have the necessary strength in depth in most areas. After all, why shell out inflated prices for players who, at best, will be sitting on the bench most weeks ?

With a little luck on their side, Spurs could go deep in this competition.

They have classy individuals, function splendidly as a collective unit and there were unmistakable signs last term that Pochettino's side were getting to grips with life at this level. The proof? The impressive victories over Real Madrid and Borussia Dortmund, and a narrow loss to Juventus in the round of 16 – a tie that they dominated for long periods.

Goalgetter...Harry Kane

COACH
Mauricio Pochettino
Constantly over-achieves on a modest budget. No medals but has the total respect of his peers.

KEY MAN
Harry Kane
Prolific goalgetter and living proof that hard work pays off.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH
Harry Winks
Already a full England international, the homegrown midfielder is now back in training after an ankle operation.

In which area do they lack cover?

Undoubtedly in the striker department, where Harry Kane more or less has to shoulder the burden alone. Back-up Fernando Llorente is arguably past his prime, and while South Korea's Son Heung-min could be deployed as a false nine he offers far more out wide.

Could World Cup burn-out be an issue for the squad?

Spurs were the most-represented club side in the latter stages of Russia 2018, with nine of their players taking part in the semi-finals. World Cups are enormously taxing affairs and Pochettino and his medical team will have to treat those individuals gently.

Will problems over a home venue cause difficulties?

Because of safety concerns Tottenham have had to delay the opening of their new stadium until at least October. It has already been confirmed that their first home game in the Champions League will be staged at Wembley and they could end up hosting fixtures both there and their new home – which is not ideal.

Targetting the last 16

CLUB BRUGGE

Nothing to lose

The good news for the Belgian champions is they have absolutely nothing to lose in Europe this season. The last time they appeared in the Champions League, in 2016-17, they finished bottom of their group, losing all six of their fixtures – against Leicester City, Porto and Copenhagen – and scored just two goals.

While a place in this season's last 16 is a long shot, the men in blue-and-black will not be approaching the competition as sacrificial lambs.

Ivan Leko, who was rather surprisingly handed the job following the resignation of Michel Preud'homme, is a tactically shrewd coach and he has assembled a purposeful side that is not afraid to force the issue. All-out attack is what they do best – hence a goal difference of plus 40 in the Belgian championship last season.

Needing to watch their finances, they did not exactly set the transfer market alight in the summer, although they did spend €26m on signings, with the newcomers including giant Croat keeper Karlo Letica from Hajduk Split, Genk front-runner Siebe Schrijvers and central midfielder Mats Rits of Mechelen.

New...Mats Rits (left) and Siebe Schrijvers

How will Leko set up his side?

He normally goes with a fluid 3-5-2 formation, which often becomes a 3-4-3 when in possession. On occasion he has used a 4-3-3 and he has also been experimenting with a 4-4-2. Leko is never happier than when his side is stretching the play as much as possible, but will he be so brave in Europe?

Is Wesley in the right frame of mind at the moment?

The Brazilian has all the ingredients to be an exceptional centre-forward – he is big, strong, determined and a good finisher. However, he has been unsettled by transfer speculation and was banned for six games after being sent off against Mouscron in August for throwing an elbow at a defender.

Strong...Wesley

COACH
Ivan Leko
Astute former Croatia midfielder who in his first season in the *Blauw-Zwart* technical area led the side to the Belgian title.

KEY MAN
Hans Vanaken
Always influential attacking midfielder, Belgium's player of the year last term.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH
Wesley
Fast-improving Brazilian striker signed from Slovak outfit Trencin midway through the 2015-16 campaign.

GALATASARAY

Financial restraints hit home

Not to put too fine a point on it, Turkey's reigning domestic champions need all the continental prize money they can get their hands on.

Reported to have debts of around €300m, the Istanbul club have been living beyond their means for some time, recklessly indulging in unsustainable transfer fees and wages.

They were banned from European competition in 2016-17 for breaking financial fairplay rules and were in the UEFA dock again this summer, where they were fined for not complying with financial targets.

Their ability to overspend is now limited, with a maximum permitted deficit of €20m in 2019 and €10m the year after. Further undermined by the dreadful state of the Turkish economy, Gala have no choice but to embrace austerity.

Inevitably, the first item on the cost-cutting agenda was the playing budget. New signings have been few and far between, with the list of arrivals restricted to on-loan Henry Onyekuru, Akhisar Belediyespor forward Mugdat Celik and Alanyaspor midfielder Emre Akbaba.

"Those times of spending millions on over-age stars have gone," says club president Mustafa Cengiz.

Arrival...Emre Akbaba (no20)

COACH
Fatih Terim
Legendary leader of the Lions, he is now in his fourth tour of duty with the club.

KEY MAN
Fernando Muslera
Experienced Uruguayan goalkeeper who joined the 100-cap club at this summer's World Cup.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH
Henry Onyekuru
Quick Nigerian striker or winger who has been brought in on a single-season loan from Premier League Everton.

Will Galatasaray struggle with a lack of creativity in midfield?

In North African stars Sofiane Feghouli and Younes Belhanda they have a pair of gifted playmakers who are full of craft and invention. The problem is they are both inconsistent, which is a source of frustration for coach Fatih Terim.

Who could be their secret weapon in Europe?

The goals, assists and counter-attacking ability of Cape Verde winger Garry Rodrigues could be a godsend. The 27-year-old flyer can be dangerous when running free in open spaces.

Threat...Garry Rodrigues

HOFFENHEIM

Coach on his way

This season will be highly significant for the German outfit, with their first-ever sip from the Champions League cup and something of a farewell tour for coach Julian Nagelsmann, who at the end of the campaign will take charge of RB Leipzig.

But while the 31-year-old is a fine man-manager, has he made an error in announcing his departure so early and will his authority be weakened?

One of Nagelsmann's strengths is his organisational flexibility and his side are comfortable in any number of system variations, although 3-5-2 is his favoured template. Early this year, following a poor run of results, he opted for a makeover, ditching a pro-active possession game for a counter-heavy approach.

Old school ...Joelinton

COACH
Julian Nagelsmann
In just over two years he has taken them from the relegation zone to Europe's top table.

KEY MAN
Andrej Kramaric
Goal-hungry Croat who has bounced back after a disappointing stint with Leicester City.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH
Kasim Nuhu
Tenacious Ghanaian centre-back signed from Swiss champions Young Boys this summer.

Are injuries going to be a problem?
There are long-term issues concerning attacking midfielders Nadiem Amiri and Kerem Demirbay. The former, one of the most promising young schemers in the country, could be out until mid-November after a stress fracture in his left foot, while Demirbay ruptured ankle ligaments in a pre-season friendly.

Who will replace last season's top scorer Mark Uth, who left in the summer for Schalke?
Probably Joelinton, who recently returned from a two-year loan spell at Rapid Vienna. The Brazilian is an excellent combination of muscular old school centre-forward and silky technique.

SCHALKE

Hard to beat

Back in the Champions League for the first time in three years, the club recently gave coach Domenico Tedesco a new contract until 2022. And why wouldn't they want the Italo-German on board for the long-term after he led them to last term's Bundesliga runners-up spot?

Tedesco's Schalke might not be natural guardians of the beautiful game but they do have a fully functional identity, one based on teamwork and combativity.

Their main difficulty will be replacing key figures who left in the summer, with international midfielders Max Meyer and Leon Goretzka heading to Crystal Palace and Bayern Munich respectively, while centre-back Thilo Kehrer went to Paris Saint-Germain for €37m.

Value... Steven Skrzybski

COACH
Domenico Tedesco
A rising star after just one season in the top flight.

KEY MAN
Naldo
Still going strong at 35, the Brazilian centre-back was third in Germany's player-of-the-year poll for 2018.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH
Suat Serdar
Tough-tackling midfielder recruited this summer for €11m from Mainz.

After last season's league form, is there still room for improvement?
Schalke tend to play with the handbrake on, sitting back in defence and waiting for the right moment to counter. They are very much risk averse, scoring just 37 goals in 34 Bundesliga games last term. But Tedesco insists his team are not overly negative, arguing: "We play with the highest defensive line in the country."

Who was their best value-for-money signing in the close season?
Goalscoring winger or second striker Steven Skrzybski, a €3.2m purchase from second-tier Union Berlin. The 25-year-old is an excellent finisher who packs a dynamite right-footed shot.

VALENCIA

Exciting times

These are happy days at the Mestalla, with the side back in a competition in which they were losing finalists in 2000 and 2001.

Marcelino has played down this term's expectations – describing comparisons with Barcelona, Real Madrid and Atletico Madrid as "unreal" – but by no means can his team be described as no-hopers.

The ever-fastidious coach has turned *Los Che* into a compact and disciplined 4-4-2 that combines defensive solidity with razor-sharp forward transitions.

On the recruitment front, Valencia have brought in French striker Kevin Gameiro from Atletico, Russian attacking midfielder Denis Cheryshev on loan from Villarreal and another loanee in Chelsea and Belgium striker Michy Batshuayi.

Loan...Michy Batshuayi

COACH
Marcelino
Ex-Sevilla and Villarreal boss for whom the smallest detail is vital.

KEY MAN
Rodrigo
Spanish international striker subject to a €120m release clause

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH
Mouctar Diakhaby
Franco-Ivorian centre-back recently acquired for €15m from Lyon.

Where are Valencia strongest?
Pace and incisiveness on the flanks is a key part of Marcelino's philosophy. The thrusts of new Danish right-sided midfielder Daniel Wass, who has been bought from Celta Vigo, could be very useful in this regard.

Best news so far?
The prayers of Valencia fans were answered in August when the club convinced Paris Saint-Germain to turn Portuguese frontrunner Goncalo Guedes' loan into a permanent transfer.

The outsiders

AEK ATHENS

Back from the depths

Life is certainly much sweeter for the Greek club than it used to be. Just five years ago, shortly after declaring themselves bankrupt, they were effectively down and out, and playing in the third division.

But how well AEK have recovered, clambering back to the top flight, winning the league title last season – their first national crown in 24 years – and punching a Champions League ticket.

The last time they took part in the CL was in 2006-07, when they famously recorded a 1-0 win over Milan at the Olympic Stadium.

Could Marinos Ouzounidis' side deliver another giant-killing ?

AEK are no slouches on the counter-attack and, as they proved in the first leg of their 1-1 draw at Celtic in qualifying, they clearly know how to soak up pressure, having played with 10 men for over half an hour. This resilience was exemplified by the bend-but-don't-break attitude of centre-backs Vassilis Lambropoulos and Marios Oikonomou, a loanee from Italian side Bologna.

Solid...AEK keeper Vassilis Barkas keeps out Celtic

COACH
Marinos Ouzounidis
Ex-Greek international centre-back who recently succeeded Manolo Jimenez in the AEK hot seat.

KEY MAN
Marko Livaja
AEK supporters are big fans of the battling qualities, stealthy off-the-ball runs and finishing opportunism of the Croat forward.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH
Kostas Galanopoulos
Central midfielder, one of their best academy products for years.

AJAX

Former greats

It cannot be stressed enough how important it is for the Amsterdammers to be once again mixing with the great and the good of the European game.

Four-times winners of the cup with the huge handles, Ajax last appeared in the competition four years ago – which is an eternity for such a proud and decorated club. Crucially they came through the summer transfer market relatively intact, with Roma-bound winger Justin Kluivert the only notable departure.

What are the key facets of Erik Ten Hag's tactical approach?

Attack-conscious fluidity, subtle approach work between the lines, nominal wide attacking midfielders in Hakim Ziyech and David Neres who are always cutting in, and ever-adventurous full-backs. Compared to his predecessors Peter Bosz and Marcel Keizer, Ten Hag encourages a much more cultured, technical modus operandi.

Key...Hakim Ziyech

COACH
Erik Ten Hag
Former boss of Bayern Munich's reserves and Utrecht.

KEY MAN
Frenkie De Jong
Brilliant midfielder or centre-back with more than a hint of the great Frank Rijkaard in his play.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH
Carel Eiting
Homegrown controlling midfielder set for a breakthrough campaign.

BENFICA

New blood

Twice winners, in 1961 and 1962, and five times losing finalists, since the dawn of the new century the Portuguese club has had to make do with a quarter-final appearance here and there.

They do, however, have an excellent crop of youngsters at the moment, such as stopper Ruben Dias and midfielders Joao Felix and Gedson Fernandes.

Exciting new blood indeed – and most importantly, coach Rui Vitoria appears to trust them implicitly.

The pick of their new signings?

Stocky Chilean striker Nicolas Castillo, who was bought from Mexican side Pumas, could prove a thorn in the flesh for many Champions League defenders.

Youth...Gedson Fernandes

COACH

Rui Vitoria
Formerly a Benfica junior team coach who has won two Portuguese league titles in three years.

KEY MAN

Eduardo Salvio
Argentinian who offers right-flank penetration and goals in equal measure.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH

Ruben Dias
Teak-tough centre-back who won his first full cap for Portugal towards the end of last season.

CSKA MOSCOW

Building again

CSKA still enjoyed a productive European campaign last term, beating Benfica and Basle in their CL group and then claiming the scalp of Lyon in the Europa League.

Very much in rebuilding mode, coach Viktor Goncharenko will miss playmaker Aleksandr Golovin, who joined Monaco, and retired defensive trio Sergei Ignashevich and the Berezutski twins, Vasili and Aleksei.

Who is the hope for goals in Europe?

Deployed mostly as an impact sub last season, Fyodor Chalov is likely to lead the line this term. A classic poacher who is able to finish with either foot, he has looked sharp this year and only just missed out on a World Cup spot.

Impact...Fyodor Chalov (centre)

COACH

Viktor Goncharenko
Belarusian with Champions League experience at CSKA and BATE Borisov.

KEY MAN

Mario Fernandes
Naturalised Russian international right-back who is one of the team's favourite attacking avenues.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH

Kristijan Bistrovic
Defensive midfielder signed from Slaven Belupo who combines muscle with easy technique.

LOKOMOTIV MOSCOW

Motivated by legend Semin

Having won their first Russian league title in 14 years, they are what could be termed a split-personality club: deeply divided in the corridors of power, where president Ilya Gerkus and coach Yuri Semin fight like cat and dog – but so unified and energised on the field of play.

Semin's powers of motivation are his main asset, with every member of the squad, young or old, Russian or foreign, coming together for the greater good.

What was their recruitment like?

The biggest incoming name was Benedikt Howedes, a World Cup winner with Germany only four years ago, who moved to Russia from Schalke.

Determined... Manuel Fernandes (centre) and Jefferson Farfan

COACH

Yuri Semin
Russian football legend in his fourth stint with the club.

KEY MAN

Igor Denisov
Known as much for his defensive midfield abilities as his head-strong, rebellious nature.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH

Rifat Zhemaletdinov
Winger who recently returned after a spell with Rubin Kazan.

The outsiders

PSV
Tough outlook

Very much used to strutting their stuff on the big continental stage, PSV have won both the Champions' Cup (1988) and UEFA Cup (1978) and are about to participate in their 16th Champions League campaign.

However, they have not gone deep into Europe's top competition since reaching the quarter-finals in 2008.

While they no longer boast the box-office stars of yesterday, they hope to bridge the class gap with the induction of coach Mark Van Bommel, whose side are unlikely to shrink or hide when the going gets tough.

The new boss will be advised by father-in-law Bert Van Marwijk, who coached Feyenoord to UEFA Cup glory in 2002 and also steered Holland to the runners-up spot at the 2010 World Cup.

Fundamental ...Luuk De Jong

Their most undervalued player?
Without a shadow of a doubt it's centre-forward Luuk De Jong. He might not be especially pleasing on the eye, and he has his goal droughts, but his aerial ability and intelligent movement mean he has a fundamental role nonetheless.

Most painful setback ?
Newly signed PEC Zwolle midfielder Ryan Thomas seriously injured a knee in pre-season training and the New Zealander could be out for a year.

COACH
Mark Van Bommel
A streetwise midfield enforcer for PSV, Barcelona, Bayern and Holland, he took up his first head coaching job this summer.

KEY MAN
Hirving Lozano
Jet-heeled Mexican winger cum goalscorer who enjoyed a highly impressive World Cup.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH
Steven Bergwijn
Diminutive wide dribbling machine and a big-money overseas move has to be imminent.

RED STAR BELGRADE
Former European champions

No wonder the massed ranks of Crvena Zvevda fans were partying so wildly after their team edged out Red Bull Salzburg on away goals in the play-off round.

Winners of the old Europan Cup in 1991 – when they beat Marseille on penalties – Red Star have not previously competed in the Champions League group stage and that means three nights of white-hot atmosphere at their Marakana home.

Rookies at this level usually prefer to limit expectations, to claim they are happy just to take part. But don't expect the bold and upbeat unit created by coach Vladan Milojevic to soft-peddle at any point. European contests strike a special chord at this club and the goal will be to make the last 16.

Comeback...Milos Degenek (in blue) taking on Red Bull Salzburg

Who should the opposition keep a particularly close eye on?
Versatile Comorian forward El Fardou Ben Nabouhane was a man on a mission in qualification, scoring six goals and making two others. Able to play in a variety of attacking positions – right-wing, leader of the line or second striker – the 29-year-old came through the youth system at French club Le Havre and has played for a number of Greek sides: Veria, Olympiakos, Levadiakos and Panionios. Despite his diminutive frame, he is known as 'Big Ben' in Serbia.

COACH
Vladan Milojevic
Formerly at the helm of Belgrade outfit Cukaricki, Omonia Nicosia and Panionios.

KEY MAN
Vujadin Savic
Influential centre-back and skipper; once on the books of Bordeaux, Dynamo Dresden and Watford.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH
Nemanja Radonjic
Potent goalscoring winger on loan from Roma.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE
The crucial dates

ROUND OF 16 FIRST LEG
February 12-13, 19-20

ROUND OF 16 SECOND LEG
March 5-6, 12-13

QUARTER-FINALS FIRST LEG
April 9-10

QUARTER-FINALS SECOND LEG
April 16-17

SEMI-FINALS FIRST LEG
April 30, May 1

SEMI-FINALS SECOND LEG
May 7, 8

FINAL
June 1
(in Madrid)

SHAKHTAR DONETSK

More Brazilian imports

Shakhtar supporters will have to learn to be patient this season and not to automatically expect a place in the knockout stage.

After bidding farewell to a string of key players this summer – among them right-back Darijo Srna, midfielder Fred, left-winger Bernard and striker Facundo Ferreyra – coach Paulo Fonseca has a new collective scenario to write, and even for someone as analytical as him it's not a commission that will be completed overnight.

As usual, Shakhtar spent the summer shopping in the Brazilian high street, recruiting box-to-box man Maycon from Corinthians and teenage wingers Fernando from Palmeiras and Marquinhos Cipriano of Sao Paulo.

Speed...Taison

Any controversial buys in the pre-season transfer window?

A number of Shakhtar followers have not taken too kindly to the decision to sign the Brazilian centre-forward Junior Moraes who was once on the books of arch-rivals Dynamo Kiev. The 31-year-old has not let the furore bother him, though, immediately finding his Shakhtar scoring boots.

COACH
Paulo Fonseca
Highly regarded Portuguese tactician who recently racked up his 100th game in charge of the side.

KEY MAN
Taison
Brazilian striker whose speed gives the Shakhtar attack another dimension.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH
Oleh Danchenko
Purposeful, assured right-back who was on loan at Russian side Anzhi last term.

VIKTORIA PLZEN

Autumn form

Having only qualified for the Champions League on two previous occasions, in 2011 and 2013 – during which they only managed a couple of consolation wins, the reigning Czech champions may rightly be viewed as novices at this level. But the west Bohemians definitely know how to hit top form during the autumn months, winning 15 out of their first 16 games in the Czech league last season.

Unlike capital city slickers Sparta Prague, whose spending spree in the summer of 2017 produced only a wipe-out, Viktoria prefer a more organic approach to team-building. Round pegs in round holes, hungry individuals and a good dollop of character.

Hopeful...Viktoria Plzen have been in the group stage twice before

"What we showed in 2017-18 was our inner strength," declared defender Radim Reznik. "The spirit in our camp was our big plus."

Who best personifies the Plzen ethos?

Totally committed centre-back and skipper Roman Hubnik. With honesty and endeavour guaranteed, as well as intelligent PR, the former Czech international previously featured for Sigma Olomouc, FC Moscow, Sparta Prague and Hertha Berlin.

COACH
Pavel Vrba
Ex-Czech Republic coach who returned for a second stint with Viktoria in June 2017.

KEY MAN
Michael Krmencik
The top scorer in the Czech league last season, he is a big, imposing man with soft feet.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH
Pavel Bucha
Baby-faced schemer recently picked up from Slavia Prague.

YOUNG BOYS

On a high

Everything the yellow-shirted Young Boys of Berne touch these days seems to turn to gold, having clinched their first Swiss title in 32 years last season, posted a maximum points haul from their opening five league games of this term and then qualifying for their first-ever Champions League.

There were more than a few people who thought a hiccup or two might ensue after inspirational coach Adi Hutter quit this summer for Eintracht Frankfurt. However, it has all has gone swimmingly since Gerardo Seoane started calling the shots.

Victorious...beating Dinamo Zagreb (in black)

Seoane's big assets are his ability to relate to players, his man-management skills and the unbreakable sense of togetherness he fosters.

Do they have what it takes defensively to make the Champions League grade?

Much will depend on how well the central defensive pairing of young Gregory Wuthrich and golden oldie Steve Von Bergen perform in tandem. Wuthrich only became a regular this term and their understanding remains a work in progress.

COACH
Gerardo Seoane
Only 10 months ago he was coaching Lucerne's under-21 side.

KEY MAN
Guillaume Hoarau
Towering French target man whose goalscoring prowess has turned him into a cult hero.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH
David von Balmoos
Keeper who was to the fore in the play-off win over Dinamo Zagreb.

Europa League fixtures

GROUP A

20 SEP	Ludogorets v Bayer Leverkusen
20 SEP	AEK Larnaca v Zurich
4 OCT	Zurich v Ludogorets
4 OCT	Bayer Leverkusen v AEK Larnaca
25 OCT	AEK Larnaca v Ludogorets
25 OCT	Zurich v Bayer Leverkusen
8 NOV	Ludogorets v AEK Larnaca
8 NOV	Bayer Leverkusen v Zurich
29 NOV	Bayer Leverkusen v Ludogorets
29 NOV	Zurich v AEK Larnaca
13 DEC	Ludogorets v Zurich
13 DEC	AEK Larnaca v Bayer Leverkusen

Celebration...Zenit drawn in Group C

GROUP B

20 SEP	Celtic v Rosenborg
20 SEP	Leipzig v Salzburg
4 OCT	Salzburg v Celtic
4 OCT	Rosenborg v Leipzig
25 OCT	Leipzig v Celtic
25 OCT	Salzburg v Rosenborg
8 NOV	Celtic v Leipzig
8 NOV	Rosenborg v Salzburg
29 NOV	Rosenborg v Celtic
29 NOV	Salzburg v Leipzig
13 DEC	Celtic v Salzburg
13 DEC	Leipzig v Rosenborg

Opener...Celtic face Rosenborg

GROUP C

20 SEP	Slavia Prague v Bordeaux
20 SEP	Copenhagen v Zenit
4 OCT	Zenit v Slavia Prague
4 OCT	Bordeaux v Copenhagen
25 OCT	Copenhagen v Slavia Prague
25 OCT	Zenit v Bordeaux
8 NOV	Slavia Prague v Copenhagen
8 NOV	Bordeaux v Zenit
29 NOV	Bordeaux v Slavia Prague
29 NOV	Zenit v Copenhagen
13 DEC	Slavia Prague v Zenit
13 DEC	Copenhagen v Bordeaux

GROUP D

20 SEP	Dinamo Zagreb v Fenerbahce
20 SEP	Spartak Trnava v Anderlecht
4 OCT	Anderlecht v Dinamo Zagreb
4 OCT	Fenerbahce v Spartak Trnava
25 OCT	Spartak Trnava v Dinamo Zagreb
25 OCT	Anderlecht v Fenerbahce
8 NOV	Dinamo Zagreb v Spartak Trnava
8 NOV	Fenerbahce v Anderlecht
29 NOV	Fenerbahce v Dinamo Zagreb
29 NOV	Anderlecht v Spartak Trnava
13 DEC	Dinamo Zagreb v Anderlecht
13 DEC	Spartak Trnava v Fenerbahce

GROUP E

20 SEP	Arsenal v Vorskla
20 SEP	Sporting v Qarabag
4 OCT	Qarabag v Arsenal
4 OCT	Vorskla v Sporting
25 OCT	Sporting v Arsenal
25 OCT	Qarabag v Vorskla
8 NOV	Arsenal v Sporting
8 NOV	Vorskla v Qarabag
29 NOV	Vorskla v Arsenal
29 NOV	Qarabag v Sporting
13 DEC	Arsenal v Qarabag
13 DEC	Sporting v Vorskla

GROUP F

20 SEP	Olympiakos v Betis
20 SEP	Dudelange v Milan
4 OCT	Milan v Olympiakos
4 OCT	Betis v Dudelange
25 OCT	Dudelange v Olympiakos
25 OCT	Milan v Betis
8 NOV	Olympiakos v Dudelange
8 NOV	Betis v Milan
29 NOV	Betis v Olympiakos
29 NOV	Milan v Dudelange
13 DEC	Olympiakos v Milan
13 DEC	Dudelange v Betis

Destination Milan... Olympiakos

GROUP G

20 SEP	Rapid Vienna v Spartak Moscow
20 SEP	Villarreal v Rangers
4 OCT	Rangers v Rapid Vienna
4 OCT	Spartak Moscow v Villarreal
25 OCT	Villarreal v Rapid Vienna
25 OCT	Rangers v Spartak Moscow
8 NOV	Rapid Vienna v Villarreal
8 NOV	Spartak Moscow v Rangers
29 NOV	Spartak Moscow v Rapid Vienna
29 NOV	Rangers v Villarreal
13 DEC	Rapid Vienna v Rangers
13 DEC	Villarreal v Spartak Moscow

GROUP H

20 SEP	Lazio v Apollon
20 SEP	Marseille v Eintracht Frankfurt
4 OCT	Eintracht Frankfurt v Lazio
4 OCT	Apollon v Marseille
25 OCT	Marseille v Lazio
25 OCT	Eintracht Frankfurt v Apollon
8 NOV	Lazio v Marseille
8 NOV	Apollon v Eintracht Frankfurt
29 NOV	Apollon v Lazio
29 NOV	Eintracht Frankfurt v Marseille
13 DEC	Lazio v Eintracht Frankfurt
13 DEC	Marseille v Apollon

GROUP I

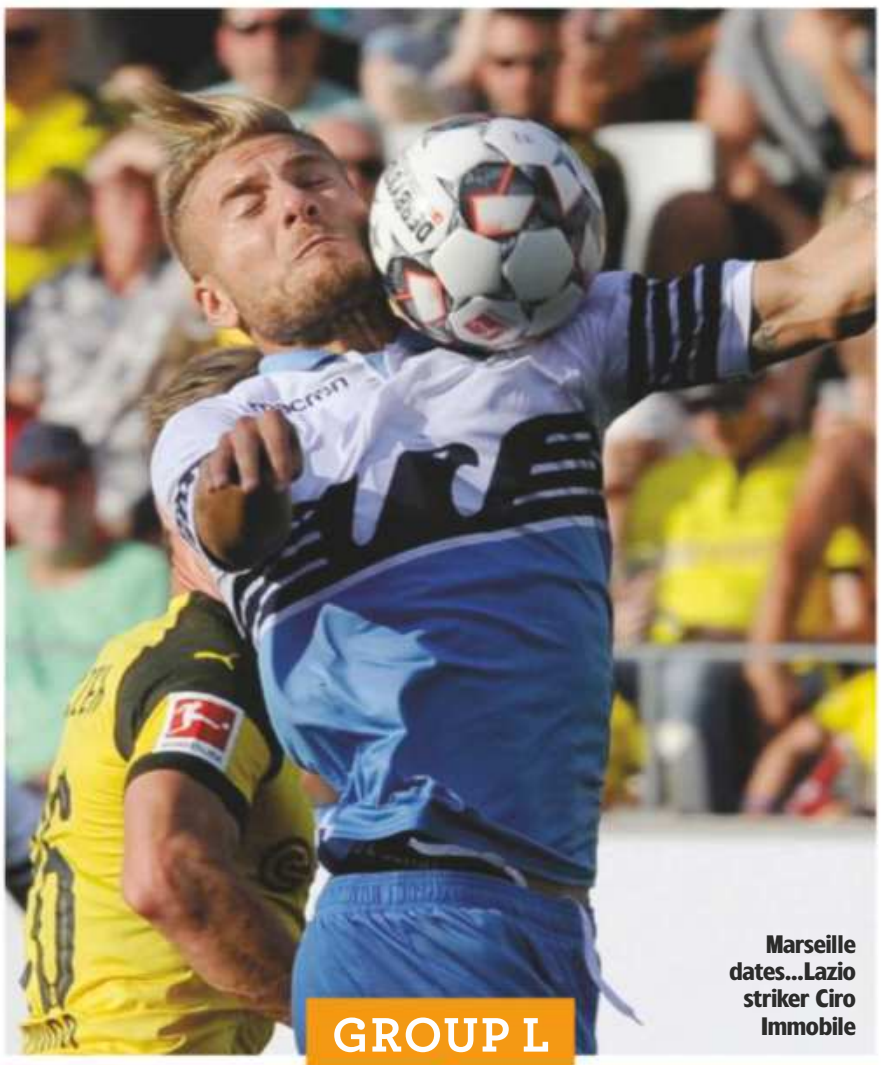
20 SEP	Genk v Malmo
20 SEP	Besiktas v Sarpsborg
4 OCT	Sarpsborg v Genk
4 OCT	Malmo v Besiktas
25 OCT	Besiktas v Genk
25 OCT	Sarpsborg v Malmo
8 NOV	Genk v Besiktas
8 NOV	Malmo v Sarpsborg
29 NOV	Malmo v Genk
29 NOV	Sarpsborg v Besiktas
13 DEC	Genk v Sarpsborg
13 DEC	Besiktas v Malmo

GROUP J

20 SEP	Akhisar v Krasnodar
20 SEP	Sevilla v Standard Liege
4 OCT	Standard Liege v Akhisar
4 OCT	Krasnodar v Sevilla
25 OCT	Sevilla v Akhisar
25 OCT	Standard Liege v Krasnodar
8 NOV	Akhisar v Sevilla
8 NOV	Krasnodar v Standard Liege
29 NOV	Krasnodar v Akhisar
29 NOV	Standard Liege v Sevilla
13 DEC	Akhisar v Standard Liege
13 DEC	Sevilla v Krasnodar

GROUP K

20 SEP	Dynamo Kyiv v Astana
20 SEP	Rennes v Jablonec
4 OCT	Astana v Rennes
4 OCT	Jablonec v Dynamo Kyiv
25 OCT	Rennes v Dynamo Kyiv
25 OCT	Jablonec v Astana
8 NOV	Astana v Jablonec
8 NOV	Dynamo Kyiv v Rennes
29 NOV	Astana v Dynamo Kyiv
29 NOV	Jablonec v Rennes
13 DEC	Dynamo Kyiv v Jablonec
13 DEC	Rennes v Astana



Marseille dates...Lazio striker Ciro Immobile

GROUP L

20 SEP	Vidi v BATE
20 SEP	PAOK v Chelsea
4 OCT	Chelsea v Vidi
4 OCT	BATE v PAOK
25 OCT	PAOK v Vidi
25 OCT	Chelsea v BATE
8 NOV	Vidi v PAOK
8 NOV	BATE v Chelsea
29 NOV	BATE v Vidi
29 NOV	Chelsea v PAOK
13 DEC	Vidi v Chelsea
13 DEC	PAOK v BATE

Big guns line up

Nick Bidwell looks at the leading contenders in this season's competition

It is often said that the Europa League is an irrelevance, that it only offers sub-standard fare.

However, since the competition came into being in 2009, not one of its winners – Atletico Madrid, Sevilla, Porto, Chelsea or Manchester United – could even remotely be described as one-hit wonders, and last season it featured an especially strong knockout phase, with six of the eight quarter-finalists being previous recipients of a continental trophy.

Never mind the inconvenience of playing on a Thursday night, this term's guest list is awash with the institutionally eminent, including two of London's finest (Arsenal and Chelsea); a seven-times winner of the Champions Cup/Champions League (Milan); arguably the best-supported club in France (Marseille); a Bundesliga big-hitter (Bayer Leverkusen) and, of course, Sevilla, who are winners of the UEFA Cup/Europa League a record five times...

New bosses... Arsenal's Unai Emery (left) and Maurizio Sarri of Chelsea

Star...Milan's Gonzalo Higuain

FAVOURITES

New **Arsenal** coach Unai Emery needs no instruction on bringing home the Europa League bacon. During his time in charge of Sevilla he steered the club to three consecutive EL titles – in 2014, 2015 and 2016 – and while a return to the Premier League top four will be his priority, he may well see European success as a distinct possibility.

The adventurous free-flowing football espoused by new **Chelsea** boss Maurizio Sarri looks the ideal platform to unleash the likes of Eden Hazard, Willian, Pedro and Marcos Alonso. As long as the Blues take the competition seriously they will be in the springtime shake-up. A note of pessimism? Sarri's poor record in Europe with Napoli, twice falling in the EL round of 32 and failing to progress from their Champions League group last season.

If ever there was a club with an incendiary passion for European fixtures, it is last term's losing finalists **Marseille**. A midweek night at the Stade Velodrome is an intimidating experience for any visiting side and the team cleverly assembled by coach Rudi Garcia is equally menacing. Sturdy, rugged and committed, the two exceptions to the hard-labour rule are playmaker extraordinaire Dimitri Payet and right-winger Florian Thauvin.

Although **Milan**'s membership of football's billionaire boys club has lapsed – their last Champions League title was way back in 2007 – it says much for the draw of the *Rossoneri* that they were still able to land a striker of the calibre of Argentinian international Gonzalo Higuain this summer.

The alliance of the former Real Madrid, Napoli and Juventus goalgetter and the club's slew of promising youngsters –

keeper Gianluigi Donnarumma, defenders Alessio Romagnoli and Davide Calabria, and front-runner Patrick Cutrone – could be spectacular.

Negative, quick-fix coaches send for the dogs of war. Others, such as **Leverkusen** boss Heiko Herrlich, prefer the fencer's foil to a blunt instrument. He has at his disposal the sharpness in front of goal of Kevin Volland and Lucas Alario, the speed and skills out wide of Julian Brandt and Leon Bailey, and the creativity of Kai Havertz.

Few other UEFA competition participants have **Sevilla**'s consistent ability to bring their A-game. Their deep-seated belief is what makes them tick and it was no surprise at all to hear director of sport Joaquin Caparros confidently claim in pre-season that not only do they have the best squad in Spain, but also the most talented coach in ex-Girona boss Pablo Machin.

A new signing to watch out for in southern Spain? Perhaps Portuguese striker Andre Silva, who will be aiming to immediately bounce back after an under-par year with Milan.

Warm-up...dark horses Sporting take on one of the faviourites, Marseille (in blue)

IN CONTENTION

Lazio have all manner of strong suits, not least their fluid attacking play, the astute in-game management of coach Simone Inzaghi and numerous game-changers, among them Serb midfield ace Sergej Milinkovic-Savic – who is still on board after months of transfer speculation – Spanish attacking midfielder or second striker Luis Alberto and prolific hit-man Ciro Immobile. But mentally they are not always the most reliable; a case in point being their spectacular self-destruction in a Europa League quarter-final loss to Red Bull Salzburg last term.

Although **Real Betis** are infrequently at the races in Europe – the sum total of their cross-border highlights is a Champions League spot in 2005-06 and a pair of Cup-winners Cup quarter-final appearances – the club stands for total entertainment. Coach Quique Setien is a football progressive: a devotee of a slick Barcelona-like passing game and an all-or-nothing approach to the result.

Villarreal, Europa League semi-finalists on three previous occasions, have strengthened in the finishing department, recruiting Espanyol's Gerard Moreno and

Potent... Villarreal's Gerard Moreno (in yellow)

Franco-Cameroon front-man Karl-Toko Ekambi, who was acquired from Ligue 1 Angers. The key man is Manu Trigueros, arguably the most underrated midfielder in Spain.

There is absolutely no possibility of German Cup holders **Eintracht Frankfurt** going through the motions, and all three of their home group games will be played in front of full houses.

The winds of change have blown strongly at the Waldstadion this summer, with ex-Young Boys boss Adi Hutter replacing Bayern Munich-bound Niko Kovac and a number of key players – among them Kevin-Prince Boateng and Marius Wolf – heading for the door.

DARK HORSES

While Portuguese powerhouse **Sporting** have gone from one debilitating episode to the next these past few months – fans attacking players, a subsequent exodus of talent, the ejection of controversial president Bruno De Carvalho and Sinisa Mihajlovic's nine-day tenure as coach – the Lisbon side ought not to be written off just yet.

Back for a second spell at the Alvalade controls, coach Jose Peseiro steered the club to a UEFA Cup runners-up spot in 2005 and still has plenty of class to work with, notably attacking midfielder Bruno Fernandes and young Cape Verde winger Jovane Cabral.

After achieving a highly creditable fifth-place finish in Ligue 1 last season, **Rennes** will be determined to make a success of an all-too rare European adventure, only their seventh in their history. Their coach Sabri Lamouchi, who was a midfielder for France in the 1990s, certainly knows what he is doing, promoting tactical discipline, combativity and counter-attacking flair. Look out for emerging attacking midfielders Benjamin Bourigeaud and James Lea-Siliki.

Turkish clubs are always energised at this level and **Fenerbahce** will be going that extra yard to make an impact. They may be in financial peril at the moment – in debt to the tune of €620m – but they still have many on-field assets, namely Slovak stopper Martin Skrtl, French playmaker Mathieu Valbuena and African forwards Andre Ayew and Islam Slimani. Former PSV coach Phillip Cocu is the new figure in the technical area.

Spartak Moscow have the tactical shrewdness and organisational skills of their Italian coach Massimo Carrera in their favour. But they will have to make do without the brilliant all-round attacking game of Dutch winger Quincy Promes who made the switch to Sevilla.

Austria's perennial champions **Salzburg**, semi-finalists last season, will be looking to make up for the disappointment of losing to Red Star Belgrade in the Champions League final qualifying round.

Asset...Mathieu Valbuena of Fenerbahce

8 Europa League players to watch

Nick Bidwell highlights the names to keep an eye on in this season's competition

1 Marc BARTRA

REAL BETIS

Classy ex-Barcelona central defender who, after an ill-fated spell in German football with Borussia Dortmund, returned to his native land earlier this year to take on the role of chief firefighter in the Betis back line.

While with Dortmund he was the most serious victim of the infamous bombing of the team's bus in April 2017, with the blast leaving him with a broken wrist.

Has earned a reputation for goalscoring on the big occasion, having been on target for Barca against Real Madrid, Dortmund and Bayern Munich, and in the Seville derby last season.

2 Amadou HAIDARA

RED BULL SALZBURG

The next Naby Keita according to the scouting rumour mill. Chelsea and Tottenham Hotspur are just two of the Premier League sides on the trail of the dynamic 20-year-old Malian box-to-box operative, while RB Leipzig are also interested.

Under contract with the Austrian champions for the next four years, the word is Salzburg may consider selling him in the January window.

Struck two spectacular goals in a Europa League victory over Lazio last season.

3 NANI

SPORTING

Some have suggested that the effervescent Portuguese front runner has had his day, that his non-selection for his country's World Cup squad was a sure sign of his declining powers. But the 31-year-old has certainly not looked past his prime with Sporting this term.

Handed the captain's armband, he has started the new campaign with the bit truly between his teeth.

Energised, and determined, he looks willing to lay it all on the line for the green-and-white hoops.

4 Viktor CLAESSON

KRASNODAR

Equally menacing as a left-winger or central attacking midfielder, the Swedish international has improved no end since leaving Elfsborg for Russia in 2015.

Hugely versatile, he combines strong running and directness with creativity and goals, and was Krasnodar's player of the year.

5 Dimitri PAYET

MARSEILLE

The French club's innovative playmaker was poetry in motion in last season's Europa League; a virtual one-man show as Marseille strode to the runners-up step on the podium.

One of an increasingly rare breed of genuine number 10s, he offers the most compelling of skill-sets: his prowess at free-kicks, tricks and flicks, inch-perfect long-range passes and outside-of-the-boot attempts on goal.

Not the most consistent of performers, but invariably decisive on big European nights.

Injury in last term's Final against Atletico Madrid meant that he missed out on the summer's World Cup.

6 Julian BRANDT

BAYER LEVERKUSEN

It's good to know that not all Bundesliga young guns go weak at the knees when domestic heavyweights Bayern Munich come calling.

Still only 22, the *Werkself* left-winger has snubbed the perennial German champions on more than one occasion, preferring to continue his development in the less pressurised confines of Leverkusen's BayArena.

"Julian doesn't feel he has outgrown Leverkusen," says his father, Jurgen.

After Germany's poor World Cup, he is one of the "Next Generation" stars *Bundestrainer* Joachim Low will be counting on.

7 Alessio ROMAGNOLI

MILAN

How fitting that at the same time *Rossoneri* defensive icon Paolo Maldini was being unveiled as the club's director of strategic development this summer, Milan coach Gennaro Gattuso was handing the captaincy to his spiritual heir.

Brought from Roma in the summer of 2015, the 23-year-old is the thinking man's idea of a rearguard commander: calm, elegant, highly technical and very much in his element when bringing the ball out from the back.

8 Aleksandar PRIJOVIC

PAOK

Razvan Lucescu, the coach of the Salonika outfit, needs no encouragement to deploy two out-and-out wingers, thus providing the Serbian hit-man with all the ammunition he needs.

Tall, strong and two-footed, the striker finished last term on top of the Greek league scoring charts and was a member of his country's World Cup 2018 squad.

Born in the Swiss town of St Gallen, he has led a nomadic sporting life, playing in Switzerland, Italy, England, Norway, Sweden, Turkey, Poland and now Greece.

Glenn Moore

Crisis in Italy

Power struggles, legal action and strike threats

An extraordinary dispute has imperilled the rejuvenation of women's football in Italy with the sport embroiled in a tug-of-war between governing bodies that has threatened the league season.

The women's game is caught in the middle of a power struggle between the Italian FA (Federazione Italiana Giuoco Calcio – FIGC) and the organisation responsible for amateur players (Lega Nazionale Dilettanti – LND), which has resulted in legal action and strike threats.

The crisis comes as the women's game, after decades in the doldrums, had begun to revive, with the *Azzurre* qualifying for the 2019 Women's World Cup – their first appearance this century. In the domestic game, Milan and Roma are poised to join Juventus and Fiorentina in fielding teams in the women's Serie A.

At issue is who controls the women's game. Hitherto played by amateurs, it has been controlled by the LND. However, the growth of the women's game in Europe has encouraged the FIGC to look anew at the national team. And the arrival of clubs such as Juventus has prompted a desire to professionalise the sport – hence the federation's decision in May to announce it would be assuming control of the upper tiers of the women's game.

The federation was confident enough to put the television rights out to tender, but the move was met with resistance by the LND who successfully challenged the decision in the federation's independent appeal court in July. FIGC has appealed to the national Olympic committee, which regulates Italian sport, but in the meantime the LND are back in charge – in theory at least.

In practice, the FIGC and the clubs appear to retain the whip hand. Strike action was mooted and the first casualty was the Italian SuperCopa between Juventus and Fiorentina, scheduled for August 25 but postponed "at the clubs' request". This followed a comment by Roberto Fabbricini of FICG that "if the SuperCopa should be postponed nobody would die".

Fabbricini's resistance was stiffened by a meeting with the big clubs and the players' union, who stressed their desire to be run by the FIGC, in part perhaps as the latter intends to make it compulsory for men's Serie A and Serie B clubs to run female teams.

LND president Cosimo Sibilia responded with talk of "fake news", of litigation outside sports bodies and the claim that FIGC could have simply decreed the players could be professionals while leaving them under LND administration. Talks continued with a pressing need to find a settlement before the start of the domestic league season on September 15.

Success...Italy coach Milena Bertolini (centre)

> "The game is going in a new direction. The professional clubs have joined the game and the amateur league is not ready for our needs... sooner or later we will be under the federation"
>
> Stefano Braghin, head of women's football at Juventus

"On a human level I can understand the amateurs as they lose something as it is starting to grow, but the game is going in a new direction," says Stefano Braghin, the head of women's football at Juventus. "The professional clubs have joined the game and the amateur league is not ready for our needs and to work as we normally do. Sooner or later we will be under the federation and start the process to be professional in five years."

At present players are only paid expenses with a maximum below €400-a-week, including match bonuses, during the season. As with all "amateur" sports down the years, there are some ways around these restrictions, such as subsidised accommodation.

At Juventus there is also the lure of full-time training at the club's Vinovo facility, while younger players are offered private education. Juve have therefore managed to attract many of the best domestic players and some notable foreign ones, including England internationals Eni Aluko and Lianne Sanderson.

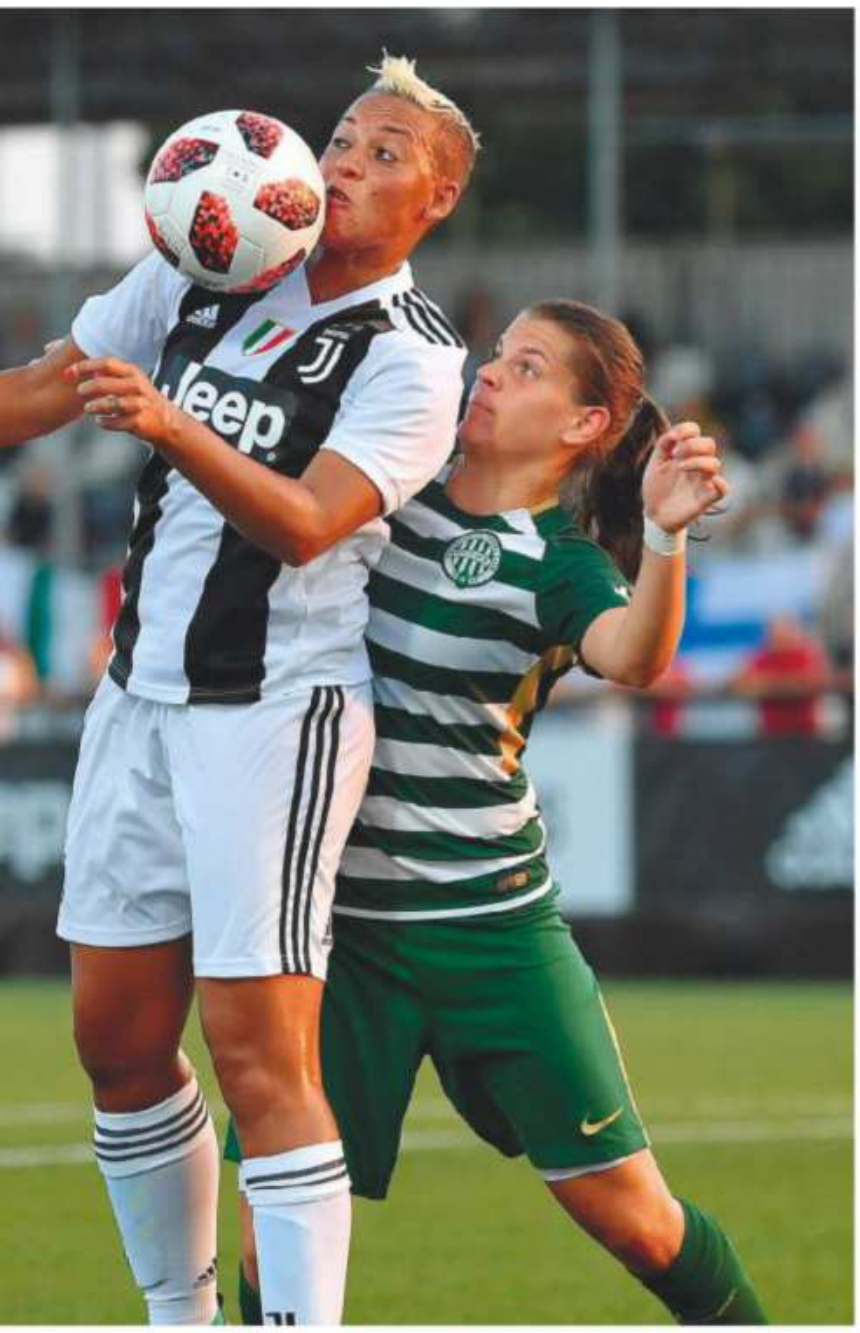
"However", adds Braghin, "the huge players we cannot afford. I could not sit down with an Arsenal player.

"Eni made a life choice, more than football. In terms of pure salary we cannot afford the standard for this kind of player. Sanderson is another story because of her injury."

Sanderson, who has been out for nearly two years with a torn anterior cruciate ligament, used the medical staff and facilities at Vinovo in return for an understanding that she would play for the club when fit.

Both players appear to have settled quickly and their experience will be important when Juventus begin a debut Champions League campaign against Brondby. It is a tricky but negotiable

Signing...Eni Aluko with Stefano Braghin



Understanding... Lianne Sanderson of Juventus

fixture and a lot easier than it might have been. The women's Champions League is a knockout competition with seeding based on past club performances, so Italian clubs are rarely seeded.

Juventus were well beaten by Chelsea and Arsenal in pre-season and Braghin says: "We are starting from the beginning and we are aware it takes time, but when you are a club with our history the expectation is very high.

"In the domestic competition we would like to be top, in Europe it takes more time. We saw at Arsenal how far we are from this kind of football, but we would like to be in the first eight teams within the next three, four years.

"I think in Italy the potential is very huge. We are a football country, everyone plays football, the culture is very high. At the moment half the population cannot play, so we give them the chance"

After a strike threat three years ago, one of the concessions won by players was the creation of a fund to cover debts they were owed when a club went bankrupt. A few months earlier the head of the LND, Felice Belloli, had been forced out after allegedly stating: "That's enough, we can't always talk about giving money to this bunch of lesbians."

Azzure coach Milena Bertolini said later: "I knew Belloli's thoughts were Italy's thoughts. Italians had the same feelings towards us, but bad things can lead to good things." WS

Round-up

Victorious...North Carolina Courage

COURAGE WIN AGAIN IN US

North Carolina Courage wrapped up their second successive National Women's Soccer League regular season title with four games to spare, having won 15 and lost one of their opening 20 matches to establish a commanding lead.

Fittingly, the Shield was claimed with a 2-1 home win over the team who beat them in last year's play-off Final, Portland Thorns.

US striker Lynn Williams scored both goals. The play-offs begin mid-September with competition for the remaining three places fierce.

Back home... Bev Priestman

PRIESTMAN RETURNS

Bev Priestman, who had spent the best part of a decade working in the national set-ups of New Zealand and Canada, returned to England as assistant manager to Phil Neville, replacing new Manchester United boss Casey Stoney.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE DRAW

The women's Champions League remains a knockout tournament but pressure for a group stage will grow after Manchester City and Atletico Madrid were paired in the round of 32.

Holders Lyon face Avaldsnes of Norway while last year's runners-up Wolfsburg meet Iceland's Thor/KA. Chelsea play SFK 2000 Sarajevo, Barcelona face BIIK Kazygurt of Kazakhstan and Bayern Munich meet Serbia's Spartak Subotica.

Ties will be played on September 12/13 and 26/27.

Gone... Andreas Heraf

HERAF LEAVES FERNS

Andreas Heraf quit as New Zealand national coach and technical director six weeks after he was suspended on full pay while an investigation was instigated after a dozen players were reported to have complained of a "bullying culture".

The Austrian argued: "The players oppose my European style, with high standards and high expectations of professionalism.

"They prefer a fun and family culture with a focus on making fun videos and opening up to social networking."

BECKIE CROSSES ATLANTIC

The WSL transfer window closed with Janine Beckie the major deadline-day move, joining Manchester City from New Jersey's Sky Blue franchise. Liverpool's Kate Longhurst joined newcomers West Ham.

JAPAN U20 WORLD CHAMPS

Japan won their first Under-20 World Cup with a 3-1 victory over Spain in Vannes, Brittany. England took third place with a penalties defeat of hosts France, who had accounted for holders North Korea in the last eight. USA surprisingly went out in the group stage.

Champions ...Japan

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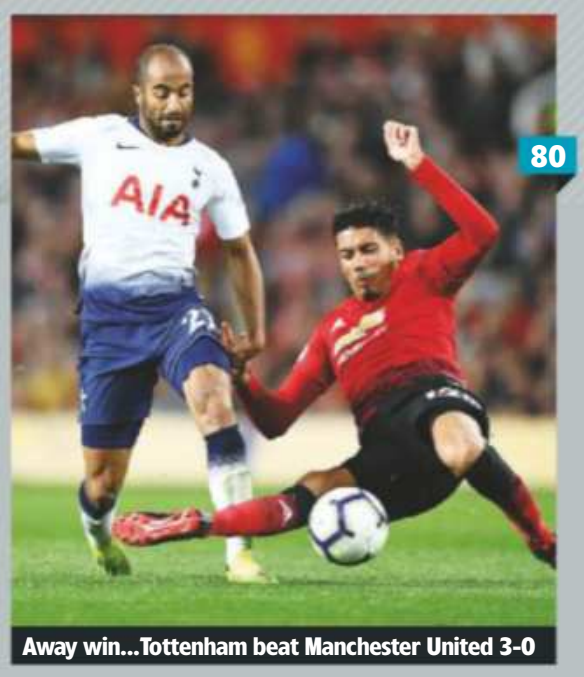

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Away win...Tottenham beat Manchester United 3-0

AUGUST 2-28, 2018

Global diary

A comprehensive record of recent events around the world

Thursday August 2

ALGERIA: Former international midfielder Djamel Belmadi becomes Algeria's sixth coach in two years.
EGYPT: Mexico's Javier Aguirre succeeds Argentinian coach Hector Cuper, who parted company with Egypt after the World Cup.
ITALY: Leonardo Bonucci rejoins Juventus from Milan in a deal for Mattia Caldara, while Juve striker Gonzalo Higuain goes the other way on a season-long loan.

Friday August 3

ARGENTINA: Lionel Scaloni, who was assistant to Jorge Sampaoli at the World Cup, and under-17s coach Pablo Aimar take temporary control of the national side in the wake of Jorge Sampaoli's exit.
GERMANY: A sell-out crowd of 57,000 see Hamburg play second-tier football for the first time as they lose 3-0 at home to Holstein Kiel.
ITALY: Juventus are the first Italian club to have a second side admitted to the professional league pyramid, with their under-23s starting this season in Serie C.
PHILIPPINES: Former England captain Terry Butcher steps down as Philippines coach after less than 50 days in charge and without managing a single game.

Saturday August 4

CAMEROON: Clarence Seedorf is appointed coach of Cameroon's national side after a deal for Sven Goran Eriksson fell through.
FRANCE: Paris Saint-Germain equal Lyon's record of eight French Super Cup wins – and six in a row – with a 4-0 victory over Monaco.
IRAQ: While many Arab countries refuse to visit the Palestinian territories as they do not recognise Israel – which controls the West Bank's borders and maintains a blockade on the Gaza Strip – Iraq plays its first-ever match in the region, beating Palestine 3-0 in Al Ram, near Jerusalem.

Sunday August 5

ENGLAND: Sergio Aguero gets both goals and becomes the first player to score 200 goals for Manchester City as they beat Chelsea 2-0 in the Community Shield at Wembley.
SCOTLAND: Aberdeen score in injury time to draw 1-1 with Rangers to deny manager Steven Gerrard a winning start in the Premiership.

Monday August 6

SPAIN: Barcelona sign Arturo Vidal from Bayern Munich for a reported €19m plus add-ons.

Tuesday August 7

ENGLAND: Bournemouth pay a club-record fee of £25m to Spanish side Levante for Colombian midfielder Jefferson Lerma.

Wednesday August 8

CHINA: Jordi Cruyff takes charge of 14th-place Chongqing Dangdai Lifan with half the 16-team Chinese Super League season gone.
ENGLAND: Chelsea make Kepa Arrizabalaga the most expensive goalkeeper of all time after his €80million release clause from Athletic Bilbao is met.
ICELAND: Former Sweden coach Erik Hamren takes charge of Iceland's national side.
PERU: Argentinian coach Ricardo Gareca signs a contract extension that will see him remain in charge of Peru through the qualifying campaign for Qatar 2022.

Thursday August 9

AUSTRIA: Sturm Graz's Europa League game against Cypriot club AEK Larnaca is held up for more than 20 minutes after a fan throws a missile at assistant referee Fredrik Klyver and cuts the Swede's head.
ENGLAND: As the transfer window closes, Tottenham Hotspur become the first Premier League club to not make a summer signing since the current system began in 2003.
ITALY: Parma's five-point penalty, imposed after a match-fixing row, is lifted on appeal. The club's striker Emanuele Calaio, who was banned for two years as part of the same investigation, has his sentence reduced to four months.

Friday August 10

FRANCE: VAR is used for the first time in French football, with Dimitri

Down to earth...Khaled Narey (left) and Hamburg lose at home to Johannes Van den Bergh's Holstein Kiel in 2.Bundesliga

Injury...assistant referee Fredrik Klyver was struck by a missile

Payet scoring from the spot as Marseille are awarded a penalty in their opening day 4-0 victory over Toulouse.
SPAIN: Lionel Messi is named as Barcelona's new captain following the departure of Andres Iniesta to Japanese club Vissel Kobe.

Saturday August 11

CHINA: Shanghai SIPG make it five derby wins out of six with a 2-0 victory over Shanghai Shenhua.
FRANCE: Patrick Vieira's first game as coach of Nice ends in a narrow 1-0 home defeat by Reims.
USA: Bradley Wright-Phillips becomes the first player in MLS history to score 15-plus goals in five successive seasons as New York Red Bulls beat Chicago Fire 1-0.

Sunday August 12

ECUADOR: At least 10 Barcelona supporters are killed and 30 injured when the bus they are travelling on overturns on its return from a 1-1 ➤

Beaten...Patrick Vieira of Nice

FIJI

STEVE MENARY

Hopeful...Fiji's Tito Vodowaqa in action against New Caledonia at the OFC Under-19 Championship

Planning an Olympic return

Coach targets Pacific Games success

Having come up short in their quest to make next year's Under-20 World Cup finals in Poland, Fiji's dream of a third appearance at a global tournament now turns to the 2019 Pacific Games in Samoa.

After beating Vanuatu 3-1 in their opening qualifier for Poland, Fiji lost to an 89th-minute goal against the Solomon Islands to set up a must-win final group game against New Caledonia. They took the lead in first-half injury time through Ratu Dau but then missed chances to wrap the game up and were eliminated when Cyril Drawilo equalised.

Responsible for all of Fiji's national sides, from under-16 to senior male and female teams, French coach Christophe Gamel says the players "learned a lot" from the qualifying experience.

Gamel played semi-professionally in France and Italy, before coaching in Hungary and Qatar, and then worked as an assistant with Paris Saint-Germain's women's section. After his PSG contract elapsed, Gamel sent his CV to fellow Frenchman Didier Chambaron, who was working as head of education at the Oceania Football Confederation and he passed it to OFC's head of soccer, Patrick Jacquemet.

"The OFC contacted me regarding a position for an [unknown] Oceania country," recalls Gamel. "I had to compete with other coaches and purpose a project, then after video conferences and Skype meetings I was offered a one-and-a-half-year contract in Fiji."

The country's two previous appearances at a major finals were at the 2015 Under-20 World Cup and the following year's Olympics – both under former Australia striker Frank Farina. Gamel now hopes to follow in Farina's footsteps, while also boosting the senior side's prospects, but he accepts it will be far from easy.

"I am going for youth, so some under-19 are [in the senior side] and were playing in our last game, in Malaysia," says the 46-year-old. "But some of those who made the Under-20 World Cup and Olympics have migrated to New Zealand and Australia. They work there and find it difficult to manage soccer with work and coming home.

"Some like Leroy Jennings hope to be called by their second nation so they don't want to come, and some are with me because they are able to fit in my philosophy of play."

Many Fijian youngsters drop football for rugby as they get older as the game offers a better chance of employment. So, to try to improve retention, a weekly stipend of around £50 is on offer from the Fiji FA.

But Gamel insists that the game needs to change if Fiji wants to make a realistic bid to succeed in its aim of qualifying for the 2026 World Cup finals.

"It would be good to create a professional league formed by the Fiji FA and OFC, with obligations for each professional club to have an academy from under-8 to under-19 with one coach per team," says the coach.

Gamel's plan remains on the drawing board at present, but after signing a new four-year deal he is targeting a return to the Olympics in 2020 if Fiji can win the next year's Pacific Games. WS

➤ draw away to Deportivo Cuenca in the league.
ENGLAND: Defending champions Manchester City kick off their defence of the Premier League title with a 2-0 win at Arsenal.
GERMANY: Robert Lewandowski scores a hat-trick as Bayern Munich beat Eintracht Frankfurt 5-0 to retain the German Super Cup.
HOLLAND: Feyenoord have two men sent off and lose 2-0 to De Graafschap to begin their Eredivisie campaign in disastrous fashion.
QATAR: Baghdad Bounedjah sets a new record for the Qatar Stars League with seven goals in Al Sadd's 10-1 thrashing of Al Arabi.
SPAIN: Marc-Andre Ter Stegen saves Wissam Ben Yedder's last-minute penalty as Barcelona beat Sevilla 2-1 to win the Spanish Super Cup in Morocco.

Monday August 13

ENGLAND: Tottenham Hotspur delay the opening of their new stadium due to "issues with the critical safety systems" and will now play home games against Liverpool and Cardiff City at Wembley.

Tuesday August 14

ITALY: Having led Internazionale to the Champions League for the first time since 2011 on the last day of last season, Luciano Spalletti agrees a new three-year deal.
SCOTLAND: Celtic fail to qualify for the Champions League group stage for the first time during Brendan Rodgers' tenure as they lose to AEK in Greece.

Wednesday August 15

CANADA: Toronto win 5-2 and beat Vancouver Whitecaps 7-4 on aggregate to claim the Canadian Championship for a seventh time.
ENGLAND: Manchester City's Kevin De Bruyne suffers a knee injury in training and is expected to be out of action for three months.
SPAIN: Koke and Saul score in extra time as Atletico Madrid beat Real Madrid 4-2 in the UEFA Super Cup, played in Estonia.

Thursday August 16

CHILE: Santiago is chosen as the venue for next year's Libertadores Cup Final as it finishes with a one-off game for the first time.
ITALY: Sunday's Milan v Genoa and Sampdoria v Fiorentina fixtures in Serie A are postponed following the collapse of a motorway bridge in Genoa on Tuesday that killed at least 39 people.
RUSSIA: Trailing 4-0 after the ➤

BRAZIL

TIM VICKERY

Title race reaches midway

Six contenders but a poor title race

The Brazilian championship reached its halfway stage with the table looking very different from this time last year.

In 2017 Corinthians had the title all but sown up after 19 of the 38 rounds, but this time there is the prospect of a much more exciting home straight.

Flamengo, leaders for much of the campaign, dropped to third, a point behind Internacional, who claimed the lead for a few hours until Sao Paulo took it back with a 2-0 victory over Chapecoense to open up a three-point lead over a chasing pack that included Gremio, Atletico Mineiro and Palmeiras, with eight points separating the first from sixth.

Extra spice is added by the fact that all six are huge clubs with mass followings, and also by the fact that the pre-season consensus was that neither Sao Paulo or Internacional were likely to be among the main contenders.

Competitive balance, tradition and surprise should make for a grandstand second half of the campaign. So why does it feel so underwhelming?

One explanation lies in the way the Brazilian game has been stripped of so much of its talent, which has had a clear effect on the quality of the individual players and of the collective ideas.

Once the World Cup was over and domestic football resumed, 1970 winner Tostao observed that "watching games in the Brazilian championship, the differences [in comparison with the action in Russia] are grand. Individually, the level in Brazil is weak...and there are many bad habits in terms of playing style, accumulated over the course of years – such as the enormous spaces between sectors of the team, centre-backs lying deep on the edge of their area, an excess of long passes to team-mates who are marked, crosses struck hopefully into the box, and many other details."

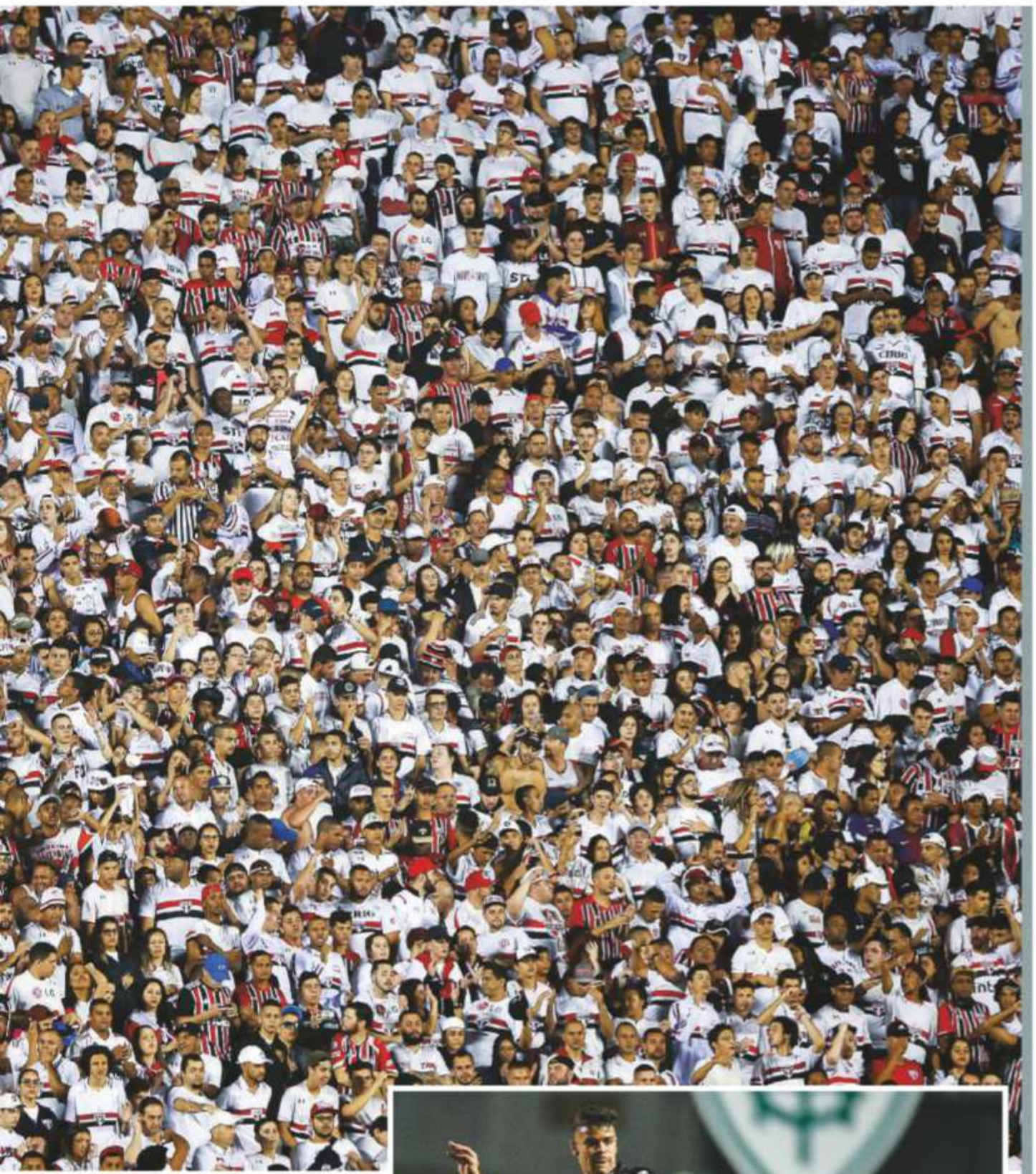
And then there is the way that the football calendar takes a huge toll on the league championship, which should be the country's flagship domestic campaign.

The national league is shoe-horned into the season with little thought for how it might best be

Ahead of the crowd ...Sao Paulo

> "The level in Brazil is weak...and there are many bad habits in terms of playing style, accumulated over the course of years"
> Former World Cup-winner Tostao

In the mix...tempers flare as Gremio (in blue) and Flamengo chase top spot



High fliers...Atletico Mineiro's Carlos Gabriel clears Edenilson of Internacional

organised. The existence of the 27 state championships immediately before dissipates the "big kick-off" effect. The action then starts and has to stop again and pause for the World Cup – and the same will be true next year for the Copa America – halting any momentum which has been built up in the early rounds.

August is especially cruel as this is when the knockout stage of the Libertadores Cup gets underway – and six of the last 16 teams in the tournament this year were Brazilian.

Add in the domestic cup – and Brazil is one of the very few places in the world where the domestic cup takes precedence over winning the league title – and the games come thick and fast.

After 16 rounds of this year's championship there had been 15 managerial changes and the pressure on the coaches is unrelenting. Some of the sides in contention for the league title have played a number of games with reserve or understrength line-ups in an attempt to keep their powder dry for the knockout competitions – and that can't be of any benefit to the national league. WS

➤ first leg in Belarus, Zenit beat Dinamo Minsk 4-0 in the return before scoring another four goals in extra time to win their Europa League tie 8-5 on aggregate.

SPAIN: La Liga signs a 15-year deal to play one game a season in the United States.

Friday August 17

FRANCE: Bordeaux suspend coach Gus Poyet for a week after he accuses the club's owners of selling striker Gaetan Laborde to Montpellier without his knowledge.

MOROCCO: CAF Champions League holders Wydad book a place in the quarter-finals with a 1-0 victory over South Africa's Mamelodi Sundowns.

SOUTH KOREA: Paulo Bento, who led Portugal to the Euro 2012 semi-finals, is named national coach.

SPAIN: Real Madrid report Internazionale to FIFA over the Italian club's pursuit of midfielder Luka Modric.

Saturday August 18

GERMANY: Holders Eintracht Frankfurt suffer a shock 2-1 defeat at fourth-tier Ulm in the first round of the German Cup.

ITALY: Ivan Strinic, who joined Milan from Sampdoria after playing in the World Cup Final for Croatia this summer, is ordered to take a break from the game after a heart problem is discovered. Cristiano Ronaldo makes his Serie A debut as Juventus beat Chievo 3-2.

SPAIN: Lionel Messi scores twice as Barcelona get their title defence off to a winning start with a 3-0 victory at home to Alaves.

Sunday August 19

ENGLAND: Watford score away from home for the first time since January as they beat Burnley 3-1.

GERMANY: Thorgan Hazard, Alassane Plea and Raffael all score hat-tricks as Borussia Monchengladbach beat fifth-tier Hastedt 11-1 in the German Cup.

ITALY: Domenico Berardi's first-half penalty gives Sassuolo a surprise 1-0 victory over Internazionale.

SPAIN: On loan from Milan, Andre Silva gets a hat-trick on his Liga debut as Sevilla win 4-1 away to Rayo Vallecano.

Monday August 20

SCOTLAND: Kenny Miller quits Livingston after seven weeks, with the club convinced that his player-manager role isn't working while the 38-year-old striker says that he's not yet ready to hang up his ➤

➤ boots and concentrate on being just a boss.

Tuesday August 21

ARGENTINA: Interim coach Lionel Scaloni says Lionel Messi asked to be left out of the friendlies against Guatemala and Colombia next month but is yet to decide whether his international career is over.

Wednesday August 22

SERBIA: Luka Milivojevic is left out of the squad to face Lithuania and Romania after his criticism of boss Mladen Krstajic at the World Cup.
USA: Nine-man New York City draw 1-1 with New York Red Bulls in the Hudson River Derby.

Thursday August 23

BRAZIL: Paolo Guerrero, whose doping ban was lifted so he could represent Peru at the World Cup, has his suspension reimposed and will no longer be able to play for club side Internacional.
PERU: Alianza Lima's 1-0 loss at home to UTC Cajamarca sees the Apertura title go to Sporting Cristal.

Friday August 24

ARGENTINA: Former international defender Walter Samuel joins the coaching staff of interim national coach Lionel Scaloni.
BRAZIL: The Arena Corinthians, Sao Paulo's main stadium and venue for the opening game of the 2014 World Cup, will not host Copa America matches in 2019.
GERMANY: Bayern Munich begin the defence of their Bundesliga title with a 3-1 win over Hoffenheim.
PALESTINE: Jibril Rajoub, the head of the Palestinian FA, is banned from attending games in an official capacity for a year after he called on Arab fans to burn Lionel Messi posters and shirts if he participated in an Argentina game in Israel in June. It led to the World Cup warm-up match being cancelled.
USA: Josef Martinez sets a new MLS record with his 28th goal of the season as Atlanta United beat Orlando City 2-1. He also equalled another league record by scoring in nine consecutive games.

Saturday August 25

ITALY: Cristiano Ronaldo makes his home debut for Juventus as they beat Lazio 2-0. Milan lose 3-2 away to Napoli.
PORTUGAL: Benfica draw 1-1 with Sporting, while Porto lose 3-2 at

Germany

NICK BIDWELL

Clubs could seek change

Battle lines drawn over 50+1 rule

Leader... Karl-Heinz Rummenigge

Never before has German football's "50+1" rule – whereby outside investors are generally forbidden from holding a controlling stake in a club – looked so ripe for reform or abolition.

In March, a majority of the country's 36 professional teams voted to retain the clause, but by no means can it be regarded as a definitive victory. The German League (DFL) says it will make a final decision on the issue at the end of the year, and with 12 of the 18 Bundesliga clubs thought to be keen for change, nothing can be taken for granted.

Those administrators who see 50+1 as a barrier to greater external funding continue to make a lot of noise, with Hanover president Martin Kind, whose application for an exemption to the rule was thrown out by the DFL this summer, threatening legal action.

The hierarchy at Eintracht Frankfurt are floating the idea that each club be allowed to decide for itself whether to conform or not, while Bayern Munich chairman Karl-Heinz Rummenigge, who is very much in the vanguard of the liberalisation movement, constantly argues that the clause is eroding the competitiveness of German clubs in Europe and that the best of the Bundesliga are being left behind by their English and Spanish counterparts.

"Everyone is worried and fearful that if we open up the market, we will lose our ability to compete," says Rummenigge. "The opposite is true. Germany would benefit from it. Either we also go down this path or end up paying a price for not doing so."

It's undeniably true that the Bundesliga has been performing badly of late on the continental front. Not since 2013 has a German team reached a European Final and last season was a near wipe-out, with two of their three Champions League qualifiers dumped out at the group stage and not one side progressing from a Europa League pool. Only Champions League semi-finalists Bayern made the passing grade.

On the other side of the fence, vast swathes of football supporters have a totally different take on club governance.

For them, the purpose of 50+1 is to protect the soul of the people's game, a guarantee of commercial fair play, low ticket prices, full stadia,

Exempt...Borussia Dortmund (in yellow) and RB Leipzig

home to Vitoria Guimaraes.
SPAIN: Raul makes his debut as a coach as his Real Madrid under-16 side draw 1-1 with Gamba Osaka.

Sunday August 26

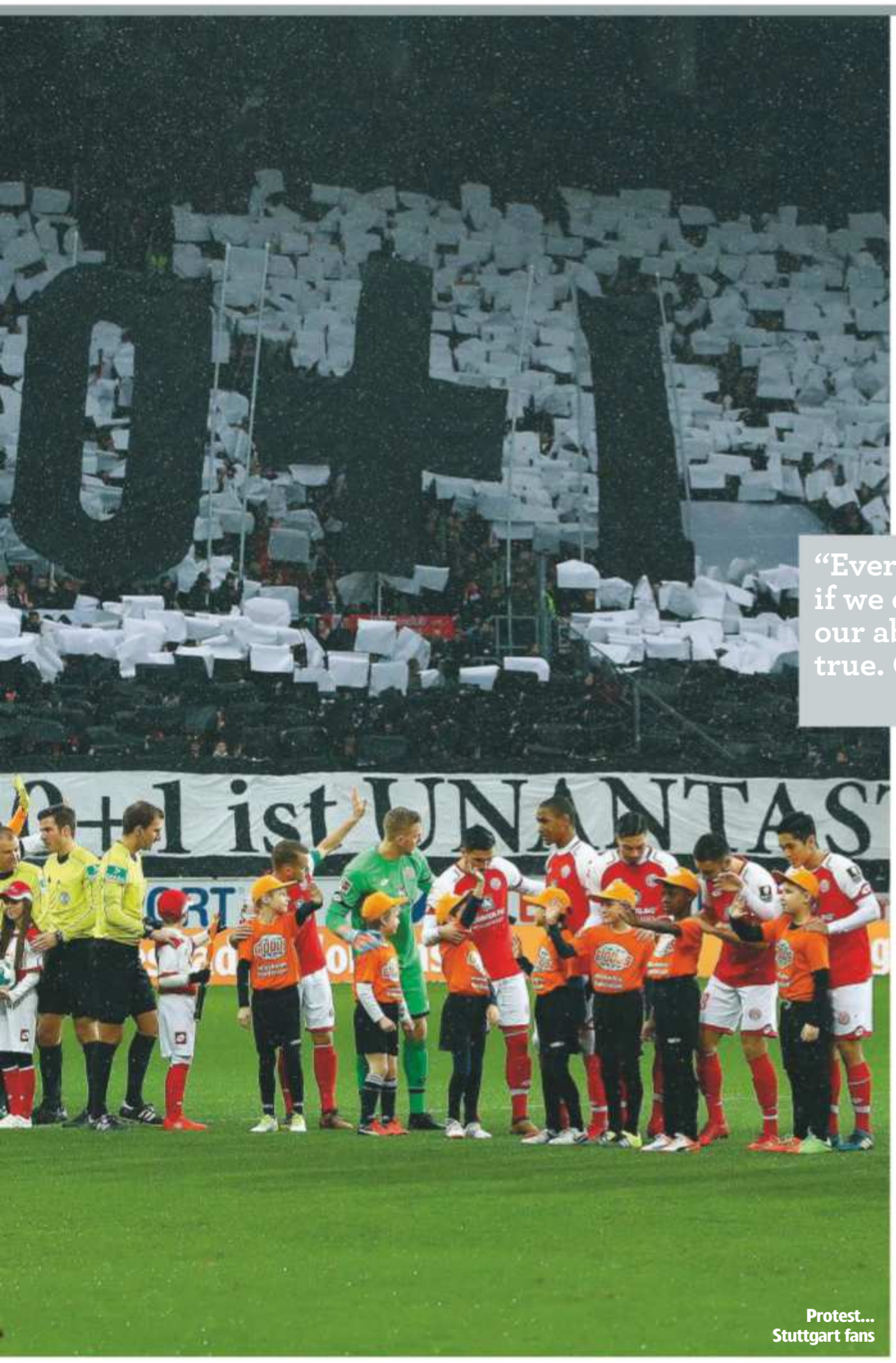
ARGENTINA: Rosario Central beat San Martin Tucuman 2-0 to remain the only side with a 100 per cent record after three league games.
ENGLAND: Watford beat Crystal Palace 2-1 to go joint-top of the Premier League, having won their first three games of a top-flight campaign for the first time.
GERMANY: Borussia Dortmund make an impressive start to the new league season with a 4-1 victory over RB Leipzig.
ITALY: Fans stay silent for the first 43 minutes of Genoa's 2-1 win over Empoli in tribute to the 43 people killed when a bridge collapsed in the city earlier in the month.

Monday August 27

ENGLAND: Pressure mounts on manager Jose Mourinho as Manchester United lose 3-0 at home to Tottenham Hotspur.
MEXICO: Tigres coach Ricardo Ferretti will take charge of Mexico's national team for September's friendlies against Uruguay and the United States.
SPAIN: Rayo Vallecano's Vallecas Stadium will be closed until at least October after fans complain that renovation work carried out during the summer following promotion to La Liga has left the ground in a dangerous state.

Tuesday August 28

BRAZIL: The home leg of Santos' Libertadores Cup round-of-16 game against Independiente is abandoned as police clash with fans who had been told 12 hours before kick-off that the Argentinian side had been awarded a 3-0 win after the Brazilian's fielded an ineligible player in the first leg.
CHAMPIONS LEAGUE: Young Boys win at Dinamo Zagreb and reach the group stage, along with AEK Athens and Ajax, who beat Vidi and Dynamo Kiev respectively.
QATAR: Al Duhail beat Persepolis of Iran 1-0 to equal South Korean side Ulsan Hyundai's record of nine consecutive wins in a single AFC Champions League season.
SPAIN: Radio network Cadena Ser says former World Cup winner Ronaldo of Brazil has agreed a €30m deal to buy La Liga club Real Valladolid. WS



Protest... Stuttgart fans

a thriving fan culture and community-driven identity.

The prospect of a Premier League-like ownership structure featuring US financiers, Middle Eastern states and Russian oligarchs is simply anathema to a large proportion of the German public. Nor would they like to experience the fate of the faithful at Milan, whose mysterious Chinese owner could not keep up his loan repayments and recently had to hand the club over to an American hedge fund.

Fans in Germany have deep emotional ties with their clubs and shudder at the thought of becoming mere customers. At grounds up and down the country, banners defending the membership model have been sprouting like springtime daffodils and over 3,000 fan organisations are now working together under the "50+1 Stays" umbrella.

"Every week, football brings hundreds of thousands of different people together," reads the mission statement of the aforementioned group. "It doesn't belong to an individual, companies or investors. It belongs to us all. At the end of the day, it's about still more money for the profiteers.

> **"Everyone is worried and fearful that if we open up the market, we will lose our ability to compete. The opposite is true. Germany would benefit from it"**
> Bayern Munich chairman Karl-Heinz Rummenigge

"For us fans, the football will not improve because of it [the scrapping of 50+1] and neither will business responsibility. Quite the opposite.

"A lot has been said about the international competitiveness of the Bundesliga. But do we really want to move to the nonsensical sums of money in Paris or crazy market in England?"

The problem for the traditionalists is that the 50+1 citadel already has been breached. Three clubs – Bayer Leverkusen, Wolfsburg and Hoffenheim – enjoy special dispensation from the rule, while RB Leipzig, who are almost entirely owned by the Red Bull soft-drink conglomerate, only comply in the loosest of senses, and Borussia Dortmund solely own 5.5 per cent of their Stock Market share bundle.

Ultimately German football will have to make a decision. Do they stick to their unique fan-friendly way of operating or totally embrace the money men?

The battle lines are drawn. WS

Nations League

2018 September-November

2019 June

LEAGUE A

GROUP A1	GROUP A2	GROUP A3	GROUP A4
Germany	Belgium	Portugal	Spain
France	Switzerland	Italy	England
Holland	Iceland	Poland	Croatia

WINNER → NATIONS LEAGUE FINAL

PLAYOFF

RELEGATION

LEAGUE B

GROUP B1	GROUP B2	GROUP B3	GROUP B4
Slovakia	Russia	Austria	Wales
Ukraine	Sweden	Bosnia	Rep Ireland
Czech Rep	Turkey	N Ireland	Denmark

PROMOTION

RELEGATION

PLAYOFF

LEAGUE C

GROUP C1	GROUP C2	GROUP C3	GROUP C4
Scotland	Hungary	Slovenia	Romania
Albania	Greece	Norway	Serbia
Israel	Finland	Bulgaria	Montenegro
	Estonia	Cyprus	Lithuania

PROMOTION

RELEGATION

PLAYOFF

LEAGUE D

GROUP D1	GROUP D2	GROUP D3	GROUP D4
Georgia	Belarus	Azerbaijan	Macedonia
Latvia	Luxembourg	Faroe Is	Armenia
Kazakhstan	Moldova	Malta	Liechtenstein
Andorra	San Marino	Kosovo	Gibraltar

PROMOTION

NATIONS LEAGUE FINAL

Winner of Group A1
Winner of Group A2
Winner of Group A3
Winner of Group A4

UEFA Euro

GROUP 1

GROUP 2

GROUP 3

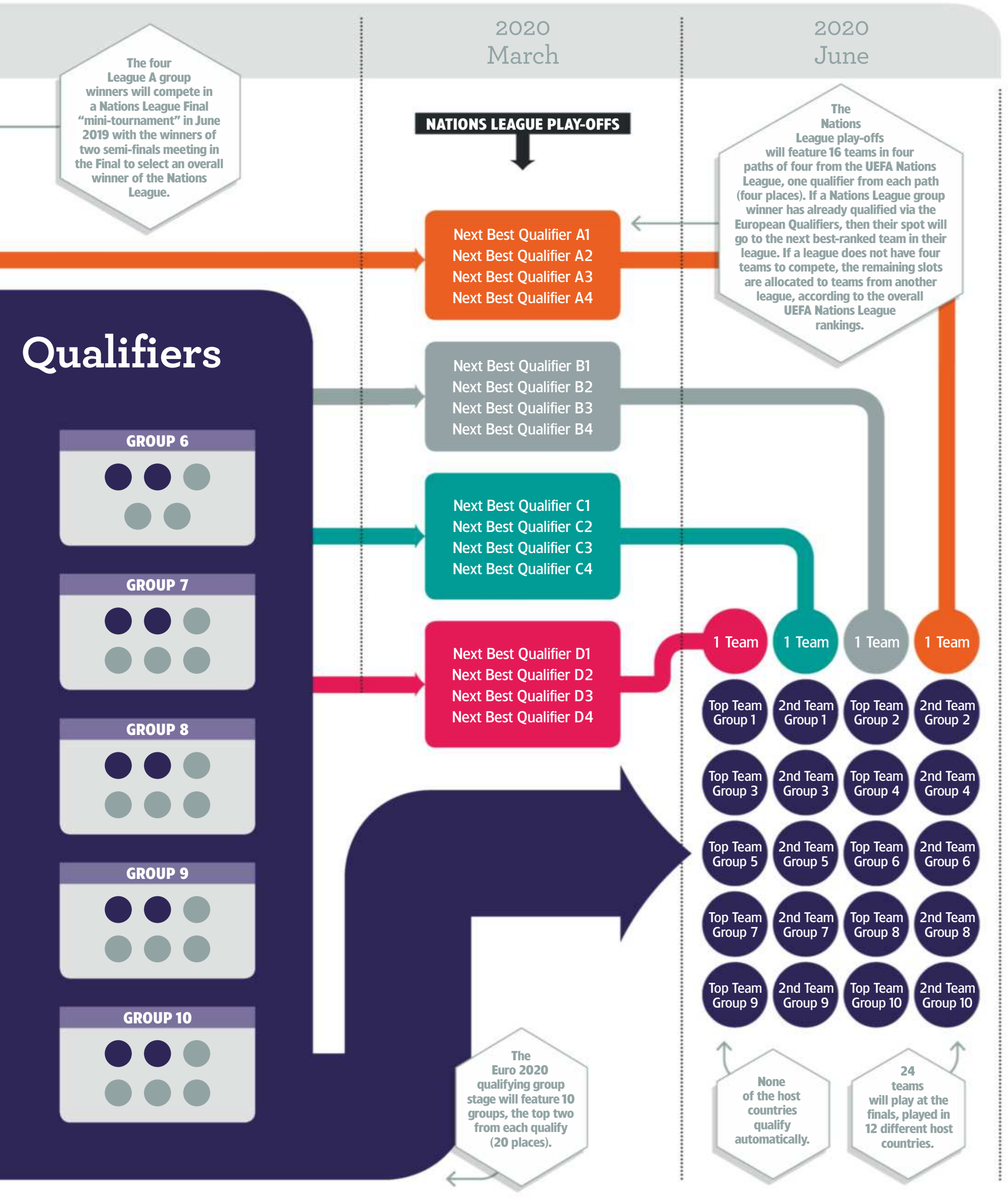
GROUP 4

GROUP 5

The teams that finish bottom of the groups in League A, B and C will be relegated to Leagues B, C and D respectively. The top-placed teams in Leagues B, C and D will be promoted to Leagues A, B and C respectively.

Each league will have a play-off path of its own and each path will feature two single-leg semi-finals and one single-leg Final, drawn on November 22, 2019, played in single venues from March 26-31, 2020. The winner of each path will qualify directly for Euro 2020.

format explained



Club football

EUROPE

UEFA SUPER CUP

(UEFA Champions League holders, Real Madrid v Europa League holders, Atletico Madrid)

Aug15 - Talllinn, Estonia
Real Madrid (Spa) 2 (Benzema 27, Sergio Ramos pen 63)
Atletico Madrid (Spa) 4 (Diego Costa 1, 79, Saul 98, Koke 104)
Aet. **HT:** 1-1. **90mins:** 2-2. **Att:** 12,424.
Ref: Marciniak (Pol)
Real Madrid: Navas - Carvajal, Varane, Sergio Ramos, Marcelo, Kroos (Borja Mayoral 102), Casemiro (Dani Ceballos 76), Isco (Lucas Vazquez 83), Bale, Benzema, Marco Asensio (Modric 57).
Atletico Madrid: Oblak - Juanfran, Savic, Godin, Hernandez, Lemar (Partey 90+1), Saul, Rodri (Vitolo 71), Koke, Diego Costa (Gimenez 109), Griezmann (Correa 57).

UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

2nd qualifying round

1st legs - Jul 24/25; 2nd legs - Jul 31/Aug1
Ajax (Hol) v Sturm Graz (Aut) 2-0, 3-1 (agg 5-1)
Astana (Kaz) v Midtjylland (Den)
2-1, 0-0 (agg 2-1)
BATE Borisov (Bls) v HJK Helsinki (Fin)
0-0, 2-1 (agg 2-1)
Celtic (Sco) v Rosenborg (Nor) 3-1, 0-0 (agg 3-1)
CFR Cluj (Rom) v Malmo (Swe) 0-1, 1-1 (agg 1-2)
Dinamo Zagreb (Cro) v Hapoel Beer Sheva (Isr)
5-0, 2-2 (agg 7-2)
Kukesi (Alb) v Qarabag (Aze) 0-0, 0-3 (agg 0-3)
Legia Warsaw (Pol) v Spartak Trnava (Slk)
0-2, 1-0 (agg 1-2)
Ludogorets (Bul) v Vidi (Hun) 0-0, 0-1 (agg 0-1)
PAOK Salonika (Gre) v Basle (Swi)
2-1, 3-0 (agg 5-1)
Red Star Belgrade (Ser) v Suduva (Lit)
3-0, 2-0 (agg 5-0)
Shkendija (Mac) v Sheriff (Mol) 1-0, 0-0 (agg 1-0)

● *Losing teams entered Europa League*

3rd qualifying round

(teams with country abbreviation entered at this stage)
1st legs - Aug 7/8; 2nd legs - Aug14
Astana v Dinamo Zagreb 0-2, 0-1 (agg 0-3)
Benfica (Por) v Fenerbahce (Tur) 1-0, 1-1 (agg 2-1)
Celtic v AEK Athens (Gre) 1-1, 1-2 (agg 2-3)
Malmo v Vidi 1-1, 0-0 (agg 1-1, Vidi on away goals)
PAOK Salonika v Spartak Moscow (Rus)
3-2, 0-0 (agg 3-2)
Qarabag v BATE Borisov 0-1, 1-1 (agg 1-2)
Red Star Belgrade v Spartak Trnava
1-1, 2-1 (aet) (agg 3-2)
Salzburg (Aut) v Shkendija 3-0, 1-0 (agg 4-0)
Slavia Prague (CzR) v Dynamo Kiev (Ukr)
1-1, 0-2 (agg 1-3)
Standard Liege (Blg) v Ajax 2-2, 0-3 (agg 2-5)

● *Losing teams enter Europa League*

EUROPA LEAGUE

2nd qualifying round

1st legs - Jul 26; 2nd legs - Jul 31-Aug 2
Aberdeen (Sco) v Burnley (Eng) 1-1, 1-3 (aet) (agg 2-4); APOEL (Cyp) v Flora Tallinn (Est) 5-0, 0-2 (agg 5-2); Atalanta (Ita) v Sarajevo (Bos) 2-2, 8-0 (agg 10-2); B36 (Far) v Besiktas (Tur) 0-2, 0-6 (agg 0-8); Balzan (Mlt) v Slovan Bratislava (Slk) 2-1, 1-3 (agg 3-4); Chikhura (Geo) v Maribor (Sln) 0-0, 0-2 (agg 0-2); CSKA Sofia (Bul) v Admira (Aut) 3-0, 3-1 (agg 6-1); Dinamo Brest (Bls) v Atromitos (Gre) 4-3, 1-1 (agg 5-4); Djurgarden (Swe) v Mariupol (Ukr) 1-1, 1-2 (aet) (agg 2-3); Dunajska Streda (Slk) v Dinamo Minsk (Bls) 1-3, 1-4 (agg 2-7); Dundalk (Rol) v AEK Larnaca (Cyp) 0-0, 0-4 (agg 0-4); F91 Dudelange (Lux) v Drita (Kos) 2-1, 1-1 (agg 3-2); FC Santa Coloma (And) v Valur (Ice) 1-0, 0-3 (agg 1-3); Genk (Blg) v Fola Esch (Lux) 5-0, 4-1 (agg 9-1); Gornik Zabrze (Pol) v Trencin (Slk) 0-1, 1-4 (agg 1-5); Hajduk Split (Cro) v Slavia Sofia (Bul) 1-0, 3-2 (agg 4-2); Hapoel Haifa (Isr) v FH (Ice) 1-1, 1-0 (agg 2-1); Hibernian (Sco) v Asteras (Gre) 3-2, 1-1 (agg 4-3); Honved (Hun) v Progres Niederkorn (Lux) 1-0, 0-2 (agg 1-2); Jagiellonia (Pol) v Rio Ave (Por) 1-0, 4-4 (agg 5-4); Kairat (Kaz) v AZ Alkmaar (Hol) 2-0, 1-2 (agg 3-2); LASK Linz (Aut) v Lillestrom (Nor) 4-0, 2-1 (agg 6-1); Maccabi Tel Aviv (Isr) v Radnicki Nis (Ser) 2-0, 2-2 (agg 4-2); Molde (Nor) v Laci (Alb) 3-0, 2-0 (agg 5-0); Nordsjaelland (Den) v AIK (Swe) 1-0, 1-0 (agg 2-0); Olimpija Ljubljana (Sln) v Crusaders (NI) 5-1, 1-1 (agg 6-2); Osijek (Cro) v Rangers (Sco) 0-1, 1-1 (agg 1-2); Partizan Belgrade (Ser) v Trakai (Lit) 1-0, 1-1 (agg 2-1); RB Leipzig (Ger) v Hacken (Swe) 4-0, 1-1 (agg 5-1); Rudar Velenje (Sln) v FCSB (Rom) 0-2, 0-4 (agg 0-6); Sevilla (Spa) v Ujpest (Hun) 4-0, 3-1 (agg 7-1); Shakhtyor (Bls) v Lech Poznan (Pol) 1-1, 1-3 (aet) (agg 2-4); Spartak Subotica (Ser) v Sparta Prague (CzR) 2-0, 1-2 (agg 3-2); Spartaks Jurmala (Lat) v La Fiorita (SaM) 6-0, 3-0 (agg 9-0); St Gallen (Swi) v Sarpsborg (Nor) 2-1, 0-1 (agg 2-2, Sarpsborg on away goals); Stjarnan (Ice) v Copenhagen (Den) 0-2, 0-5 (agg 0-7); Sutjeska (Mne) v Alashkert (Arm) 0-1, 0-0 (agg 0-1); The New Saints (Wal) v Lincoln Red Imps (Gib) 2-1, 1-1 (agg 3-2); Tobol (Kaz) v Pyunik (Arm) 2-1, 0-1 (agg 2-2, Pyunik on away goals); Torpedo Kutaisi (Geo) v Vikingur (Far) 3-0, 4-0 (agg 7-0); Ufa (Rus) v Domzale (Sln) 0-0, 1-1 (agg 1-1, Ufa on away goals); Ventspils (Lat) v Bordeaux (Fra) 0-1, 1-2 (agg 1-3); Viitorul (Rom) v Vitesse Arnhem (Hol) 2-2, 1-3 (agg 3-5); Zalgiris (Lit) v Vaduz (Lie) 1-0, 1-1 (agg 2-1); Zeljeznicar (Bos) v Apollon (Cyp) 1-2, 1-3 (agg 2-5); Zrinjski (Bos) v Valletta (Mlt) 1-1, 2-1 (agg 3-2)

Bye to 3rd qualifying round: *Cork City*

3rd qualifying round

(teams with country abbreviation entered at this stage)
1st legs - Aug 7/9; 2nd legs - Aug16
Alashkert v CFR Cluj (Rom) 0-2, 0-5 (agg 0-7); Apollon v Dinamo Brest 4-0, 0-1 (agg 4-1); Basaksehir (Tur) v Burnley 0-0, 0-1 (aet) (agg 0-1); Besiktas v LASK Linz 1-0, 1-2 (agg 2-2, Besiktas on away goals); Cork City (RoI) v Rosenborg (Nor) 0-2, 0-3 (agg 0-5); CSKA Sofia v Copenhagen 1-2, 1-2 (agg 2-4); Dinamo Minsk v Zenit St Petersburg (Rus) 4-0, 1-8 (aet) (agg 5-8); Genk v Lech Poznan 2-0, 2-1 (agg 4-1); Hajduk Split v FCSB 0-0, 1-2 (agg 1-2); Hapoel Beer Sheva (Isr) v APOEL 2-2, 1-3 (agg 3-5); Hapoel Haifa v Atalanta 1-4, 0-2 (agg 1-6); Hibernian v Molde 0-0, 0-3 (agg 0-3); Jagiellonia v Gent (Blg) 0-1, 1-3 (agg 1-4); Legia Warsaw (Pol) v F91 Dudelange 1-2, 2-2 (agg 3-4); Ludogorets (Bul) v Zrinjski 1-0, 1-1 (agg 2-1); Mariupol v Bordeaux 1-3, 1-2 (agg 2-5); Nordsjaelland v Partizan Belgrade 1-2, 2-3 (agg 3-5); Olimpija Ljubljana v HJK Helsinki (Fin) 3-0, 4-1 (agg 7-1); Olympiakos (Gre) v Lucerne (Swi) 4-0, 3-1 (agg 7-1); Pyunik v Maccabi Tel Aviv 0-0, 1-2 (agg 1-2); Rangers v Maribor 3-1, 0-0 (agg 3-1); RB Leipzig v Universitatea Craiova (Rom) 3-1, 1-1 (agg 4-2); Sarpsborg v Rijeka (Cro) 1-1, 1-0 (agg 2-1); Sevilla v Zalgiris 1-0, 5-0 (agg 6-0); Sheriff (Mol) v Valur 1-0, 1-2 (agg 2-2, Sheriff on away goals); Sigma Olomouc (CzR) v Kairat 2-0, 2-1 (agg 4-1); Slovan Bratislava v Rapid Vienna (Aut) 2-1, 0-4 (agg 2-5); Spartak Subotica v Brondby (Den) 0-2, 1-2 (agg 1-4); Spartaks Jurmala v Suduva (Lit) 0-1, 0-0 (agg 0-1); Sturm Graz (Aut) v AEK Larnaca 0-2, 0-5 (agg 0-7); The New Saints v Midtjylland (Den) 0-2, 1-3 (agg 1-5); Torpedo Kutaisi v Kukesi (Alb) 5-2, 0-2 (agg 5-4); Trencin v Feyenoord (Hol) 4-0, 1-1 (agg 5-1); Ufa v Progres Niederkorn 2-1, 2-2 (agg 4-3); Vitesse Arnhem v Basle (Swi) 0-1, 0-1 (agg 0-2); Zorya (Ukr) v Sporting Braga (Por) 1-1, 2-2 (agg 3-3, Zorya on away goals)

CONCACAF

CONCACAF LEAGUE

1st round

1st legs - Jul 31-Aug 2; 2nd legs - Aug 7-9
Arabe Unido (Pan) v Arnett Gardens (Jam)
3-0, 1-2 (agg 4-2)
Club Franciscain (Mar) v Walter Ferretti (Nic)
1-0, 0-1 (agg 1-1, Walter Ferretti 4-1 on pens)
Diriangen (Nic) v Universitario (Pan)
0-4, 1-3 (agg 1-7)
FAS (ESv) v Perez Zeledon (CR)
2-1, 1-1 (agg 3-2)
Herediano (CR) v Santa Tecla (ESv)
1-0, 1-2 (agg 2-2, Herediano on away goals)
Motagua (Hnd) v Belmopan Bandits (Blz)
2-0, 1-0 (agg 3-0)
Santos de Guapiles (CR) v Portmore Utd (Jam)
1-2, 2-1 (agg 3-3, Portmore 7-6 on pens)
Tauro (Pan) v Real Espana (Hnd)
1-0, 1-1 (agg 2-1)

BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS

2018 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
One Love[1] (C)	15	13	1	1	48	19	40
Sugar Boyz	16	11	1	4	51	19	34
Islanders[1]	15	10	2	3	34	10	32
Wolues	16	8	1	7	46	30	25
Panthers	16	7	2	7	37	23	23
Rebels	16	6	1	9	22	36	19
Old Madrid	16	5	3	8	29	36	18
Virgin Gorda	16	2	2	12	14	41	8
Sea Argo	16	2	1	13	18	85	7

[1]*Remaining match not played*

CANADA

2018 Championship Final

1st leg - Aug 8; 2nd leg - Aug15
Vancouver Whitecaps v Toronto
2-2, 2-5 (agg 4-7)

AFRICA

CAMEROON

2018 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Coton Sport (C)	34	19	12	3	59	24	69
UMS Loum	34	14	13	7	25	16	55
Bamboutos	34	14	11	9	32	21	53
New Star	34	14	7	13	29	31	49
Fovu Baham	34	13	9	12	30	32	48
YOSA	34	10	17	7	20	15	47
Union Douala	34	11	13	10	35	34	46
Eding Sport	34	11	13	10	37	35	46
Colombe	34	10	15	9	29	25	45
Feutcheu	34	11	12	11	33	39	45
Dragon	34	11	11	12	42	45	44
APEJES Acad	34	11	11	12	43	42	44
Stade Renard	34	10	12	12	27	29	42
Fortuna	34	11	9	14	36	41	42
Les Astres	34	10	12	12	31	29	42
Unisport (R)	34	9	13	12	24	29	40
Aigle Royal (R)	34	8	8	18	26	42	32
Yafoot (R)	34	6	8	20	17	46	26

GUINEA-BISSAU

2017-18 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
SB Benfica (C)	24	14	7	3	38	19	49
UDIB	24	14	7	3	37	16	49
Pelundo	24	10	6	8	23	27	36
Nuno Tristao	24	9	8	7	33	26	35
Portos	24	8	10	6	25	22	34
Cuntum	24	7	10	7	25	24	31
Os Balantas	24	7	9	8	24	26	30
Sporting GB	24	7	7	10	28	33	28
Lagartos	24	6	9	9	24	27	27
Desp'vo Farim	24	6	8	10	23	30	26
Flamengo	24	6	7	11	22	30	25
SC Bafata	24	6	6	12	21	30	24
Canchungo (R)	24	6	6	12	17	30	24

Sonaco excluded from league after failing to show up for two consecutive games at the start of the season

NIGER

2017-18 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sonidep (C)	30	20	8	2	46	13	68
GNN	30	16	7	7	40	24	55
FAN	30	15	9	6	62	31	54
Nigelec	30	12	11	7	43	31	47
US GN	30	14	5	11	36	29	47
Police	30	12	10	8	44	27	46
Akokana	30	10	14	6	25	24	44
Sahel	30	12	5	13	28	26	41
Douanes	30	9	11	10	32	32	38
Urana	30	6	16	8	18	23	34
Racing B'koki	30	6	12	12	22	39	30
Tahoua	30	6	12	12	31	48	30
Espoir	30	5	13	12	26	51	28
Jangorzo	30	6	10	14	33	46	28
Olympic	30	6	8	16	25	43	26
Entente (R)	30	4	11	15	26	50	23

SOUTH AMERICA

SUDAMERICANA CUP

2nd round

1st legs - Jul17-Aug 2; 2nd legs - Jul 24-Aug16
Atletico Paranaense (Bra) v Penarol (Uru) 2-0, 4-1 (agg 6-1); Bahia (Bra) v Cerro (Uru) 2-0, 1-1 (agg 3-1); Boston River (Uru) v Banfield (Arg) 1-0, 0-2 (agg 1-2); Caracas (Ven) v Sport Huancayo (Per) 2-0, 4-3 (agg 6-3); Defensa y Justicia (Arg) v El Nacional (Ecu) 2-0, 0-1 (agg 2-1); Deportivo Cali (Col) v Bolivar (Bol) 4-0, 2-1 (agg 6-1); Deportivo Cuenca (Ecu) v Jorge Wilstermann (Bol) 2-2, 2-2 (agg 4-4, Deportivo Cuenca 6-5 on pens); Fluminense (Bra) v Defensor Sporting (Uru) 2-0, 1-0 (agg 3-0); General Diaz (Par) v Millonarios (Col) 1-1, 0-4 (agg 1-5); Lanus (Arg) v Junior (Col) 1-0, 0-1 (agg 1-1, Junior 3-2 on pens); LDU Quito (Ecu) v Vasco da Gama (Bra) 3-1, 0-1 (agg 3-2); Nacional Asuncion (Par) v Botafogo (Bra) 2-1, 0-2 (agg 2-3); Rampla Juniors (Uru) v Santa Fe (Col) 0-0, 0-2 (agg 0-2); San Lorenzo (Arg) v Deportes Temuco (Chl) 3-0 (awarded[1]), 0-1 (agg 3-1); Sao Paulo (Bra) v Colon (Arg) 0-1, 1-0 (agg 1-1, Colon 5-3 on pens); Sol de America (Par) v Nacional Montevideo (Uru) 0-0, 0-1 (agg 0-1)
[1]*Deportes Temuco fielded an ineligible player in the1st leg, which Temuco originally won 2-1*

3rd round draw

Bahia v Botafogo; Caracas v Atletico Paranaense; Defensa y Justicia v Banfield; Deportivo Cuenca v Fluminense; Junior v Colon; LDU Quito v Deportivo Cali; San Lorenzo v Nacional Montevideo; Santa Fe v Millonarios
1st legs - Aug 21-Sep 26; 2nd legs - Sep19-Oct 3

ASIA

EAST TIMOR

2018 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Boavista (C)	14	10	2	2	33	8	32
Karketu	14	7	4	3	32	16	25
Atl Ultramar	14	6	4	4	40	16	22
Ponta Leste	14	6	4	4	29	17	22
SL Benfica	14	5	7	2	24	16	22
Academica	14	6	1	7	26	34	19
DIT (R)	14	3	3	8	21	29	12
Cacusan (R)	14	0	1	13	9	78	1

LAOS

2018 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Lao Toyota (C)	14	11	1	2	47	11	34
Lao Police	14	8	1	5	24	16	25
Luang Prabang	14	6	4	4	18	18	22
Master 7	14	6	3	5	26	24	21
Savan United	14	5	3	6	14	23	18
Yng Elephant	14	4	3	7	14	17	15
Lao Army	14	2	5	7	12	28	11
DK	14	2	4	8	12	30	10

MALAYSIA

2018 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Johor DT (C)	22	19	2	1	47	9	59
Perak	22	10	6	6	35	27	36
PKNS	22	10	5	7	37	29	35
Pahang	22	9	7	6	35	21	34
Terengganu	22	10	4	8	32	31	34
Kedah	22	9	5	8	37	36	32
Melaka United	22	9	4	9	33	38	31
Selangor	22	7	6	9	35	39	27
PKNP	22	7	4	11	25	31	25
Kuala Lumpur	22	7	3	12	39	51	24
Kelantan (R)	22	5	3	14	20	43	18
Negeri S'n (R)	22	4	3	15	27	47	15

PHILIPPINES

2018 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ceres (C)	25	19	3	3	66	25	60
Kaya	25	15	4	6	58	32	49
Aguilas	25	11	6	8	52	39	39
Stallion[1]	25	12	3	10	49	45	36
JPV[1]	25	7	2	16	46	63	20
Global	25	1	2	22	18	85	5

[1]*3pts deducted for failing to comply with a league ruling*

KEY TO TABLES
(C) = champions (R) = relegated

Internationals

SAINT-BARTHELEMY EVENT

Played in Saint-Jean, Saint-Barthelemy

Jul 27
Saint-Martin 0
British Virgin Islands 0

Saint-Barthelemy 1
Anguilla 2 (Guishard 45+3, Battice 47)
HT: 0-1

Jul 28
Saint-Martin 5 (Joachim 8, 26, 64, Arrondell 25, Stoeber 48)
Anguilla 1 (Findlay 52)
HT: 3-0

Saint-Barthelemy 3
British Virgin Islands 4 (Johnson 29, pen 90+9, Caesar 50, Fisher 57)
HT: 0-1

FRIENDLIES

Sunday, July 22
Jul 22 - Monrovia
Liberia 0
Sierra Leone 0

Wednesday, July 25
Jul 25 - Philipsburg
Sint Maarten 2 (Drijvers x2)
British Virgin Islands 3 (og 25, Johnson 35, Rowe 65)

Saturday, August 4
Aug 4 - San Pedro
Belize 1 (Lopez 79)
Barbados 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Miranda (ESv)

Aug 4 - Al Ram
Palestine 0
Iraq 3 (Fanar 5, Nadhim 34, Shokan 89)
HT: 0-2

Saturday, August 11
Aug11 - Le Gosier
Guadeloupe 0
Dominica 0
Att: 500. **Ref:** Auguste (SMen)
Sent off: Prince (Dominica) 83; Albina (Guadeloupe) 85

Wednesday, August 15
Aug15 - Guatemala City
Guatemala 3 (Marquez 7, Guerra 54, Ceballos pen 82)
Cuba 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Aguilar (ESv)

Friday, August 17
Aug17 - St George's
Grenada 1 (Lewis 56)
Jamaica 5 (Green 12, Vassell 20, 48, St John og 59, Marsh 71)
HT: 0-2. **Ref:** Ward (SKN)

Saturday, August 18
Aug18 - Grodig, Austria
Andorra 0
United Arab Emirates 0

Aug18 - Cayenne
French Guiana 0
Surinam 4 (Comvalius 31, 40, 45, Verwey 50)
HT: 0-3. **Ref:** Prevot (FrG)

Aug18 - Quetzaltenango
Guatemala 1 (Pineda 10)
Cuba 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Aguilar (ESv)

Monday, August 20
Aug 20 - Bridgetown
Barbados 2 (Jules 33, Edmee 44)
Jamaica 2 (Morgan 79, Vassell pen 86)
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Moore (Guy)

Sunday, August 26
Aug 26 - Bridgetown
Barbados 0
Cuba 0

Fixtures

UEFA NATIONS LEAGUE

Matchdays1-4 (of 6)

League A

Group A1
Sep 6: Germany v France.
Sep 9: France v Holland.
Oct 13: Holland v Germany.
Oct 16: France v Germany.

Group A2
Sep 8: Switzerland v Iceland.
Sep 11: Iceland v Belgium.
Oct 12: Belgium v Switzerland.
Oct 15: Iceland v Switzerland.

Group A3
Sep 7: Italy v Poland.
Sep 10: Portugal v Italy.
Oct 11: Poland v Portugal.
Oct 14: Poland v Italy.

Group A4
Sep 8: England v Spain.
Sep 11: Spain v Croatia.
Oct 12: Croatia v England.
Oct 15: Spain v England.

League B

Group B1
Sep 6: Czech Republic v Ukraine.
Sep 9: Ukraine v Slovakia.
Oct 13: Slovakia v Czech Republic.
Oct 16: Ukraine v Czech Republic.

Group B2
Sep 7: Turkey v Russia.
Sep 10: Sweden v Turkey.
Oct 11: Russia v Sweden.
Oct 14: Russia v Turkey.

Group B3
Sep 8: Northern Ireland v Bosnia-Herzegovina.
Sep 11: Bosnia-Herzegovina v Austria.
Oct 12: Austria v Northern Ireland.
Oct 15: Bosnia-Herzegovina v Northern Ireland.

Group B4
Sep 6: Wales v Rep of Ireland.
Sep 9: Denmark v Wales.
Oct 13: Rep of Ireland v Denmark.
Oct 16: Rep of Ireland v Wales.

League C

Group C1
Sep 7: Albania v Israel.
Sep 10: Scotland v Albania.
Oct 11: Israel v Scotland.
Oct 14: Israel v Albania.

Group C2
Sep 8: Estonia v Greece; Finland v Hungary.
Sep 11: Finland v Estonia; Hungary v Greece.
Oct 12: Estonia v Finland; Greece v Hungary.
Oct 15: Estonia v Hungary; Finland v Greece.

Group C3
Sep 6: Norway v Cyprus; Slovenia v Bulgaria.
Sep 9: Bulgaria v Norway; Cyprus v Slovenia.
Oct 13: Bulgaria v Cyprus; Norway v Slovenia.
Oct 16: Norway v Bulgaria; Slovenia v Cyprus.

Group C4
Sep 7: Lithuania v Serbia; Romania v Montenegro.
Sep 10: Monte'gro v Lithuania; Serbia v Romania.
Oct 11: Lithuania v Romania; Montenegro v Serbia.
Oct 14: Lithuania v Montenegro; Romania v Serbia.

League D

Group D1
Sep 6: Kazakhstan v Georgia; Latvia v Andorra.
Sep 9: Georgia v Latvia.
Sep 10: Andorra v Kazakhstan.
Oct 13: Georgia v Andorra; Latvia v Kazakhstan.
Oct 16: Kazakhstan v Andorra; Latvia v Georgia.

Group D2
Sep 8: Belarus v S Marino; Lux'bourg v Moldova.
Sep 11: Moldova v Belarus; S Marino v Lux'bourg.
Oct 12: Belarus v Lux'bourg; Moldova v S Marino.
Oct 15: Belarus v Moldova; Lux'bourg v S Marino.

Group D3
Sep 7: Azerbaijan v Kosovo; Faroe Is v Malta.
Sep 10: Kosovo v Faroe Is; Malta v Azerbaijan.
Oct 11: Faroe Is v Azerbaijan; Kosovo v Malta.
Oct 14: Azerbaijan v Malta; Faroe Is v Kosovo.

Group D4
Sep 6: Armenia v Liech'stein; Gibraltar v Maced'ia.
Sep 9: Liech'stein v Gibraltar; Maced'ia v Armenia.
Oct 13: Armenia v Gibraltar; Maced'ia v Liech'stein.
Oct 16: Armenia v Maced'ia; Gibraltar v Liech'stein.

2019 AFRICAN NATIONS CUP QUALS

Matchdays 2-4 (of 6)

Group A
Sep 7-9: Equatorial Guinea v Sudan; Madagascar v Senegal.
Oct 10: Equatorial Guinea v Madagascar; Senegal v Sudan.
Oct 13: Madagascar v Equatorial Guinea; Sudan v Senegal.

Group B
Sep 7-9: Comoros v Cameroon; Morocco v Malawi.
Oct 10: Cameroon v Malawi; Morocco v Comoros.
Oct 13: Comoros v Morocco; Malawi v Cameroon.

Group C
Sep 7-9: Gabon v Burundi; South Sudan v Mali.
Oct 10: Gabon v South Sudan; Mali v Burundi.
Oct 13: Burundi v Mali; South Sudan v Gabon.

Group D
Sep 7-9: Gambia v Algeria; Togo v Benin.
Oct 10: Algeria v Benin; Togo v Gambia.
Oct 13: Benin v Algeria; Gambia v Togo.

Group E
Sep 7-9: Seychelles v Nigeria; Sth Africa v Libya.
Oct 10: Nigeria v Libya.
Oct 13: Libya v Nigeria; Sth Africa v Seychelles.
Oct 16: Seychelles v Sth Africa.

Group F
Sep 7-9: Ethiopia v Sierra Leone; Kenya v Ghana.
Oct 10: Ethiopia v Kenya; Ghana v Sierra Leone.
Oct 13: Kenya v Ethiopia; Sierra Leone v Ghana.

Group G
Sep 7-9: Congo v Zimbabwe; Liberia v DR Congo.
Oct 10: Congo v Liberia; DR Congo v Zimbabwe.
Oct 13: Liberia v Congo; Zimbabwe v DR Congo.

Group H
Sep 7-9: Guinea v Central African Rep; Rwanda v Ivory Coast.
Oct 10: Guinea v Rwanda; Ivory Coast v Central African Rep.
Oct 13: Central African Rep v Ivory Coast; Rwanda v Guinea.

Group I
Sep 7-9: Angola v Botswana; Mauritania v Burkina Faso.
Oct 10: Angola v Mauritania; Burkina Faso v Botswana.
Oct 13: Botswana v Burkina Faso; Mauritania v Angola.

Group J
Sep 7-9: Egypt v Niger; Swaziland v Tunisia.
Oct 10: Egypt v Swaziland: Tunisia v Niger.
Oct 13: Niger v Tunisia; Swaziland v Egypt.

Group K
Sep 7-9: Mozambique v Guinea-Bissau; Namibia v Zambia.
Oct 10: Mozambique v Namibia; Zambia v Guinea-Bissau.
Oct 13: Guinea-Bissau v Zambia; Namibia v Mozambique.

Group L
Sep 7-9: Lesotho v Cape Verde; Uganda v Tanzania.
Oct 10: Cape Verde v Tanzania; Uganda v Lesotho.
Oct 13: Lesotho v Uganda; Tanzania v Cape Verde.

CONCACAF NATIONS LEAGUE QUALS

Matchdays1 & 2 (of 4)

Sep 6: Dominica v Surinam; Guyana v Barbados.
Sep 7: Anguilla v French Guiana; Antigua & Barbuda v St Lucia; Belize v Bahamas.
Sep 8: Cuba v Turks & Caicos Is; Montserrat v El Salvador; St Vincent & The Grenadines v Nicaragua.
Sep 9: Bonaire v Dominican Republic; Aruba v Bermuda; Jamaica v Cayman Is; St Kitts & Nevis v Puerto Rico; US Virgin Is v Canada.
Sep 10: Curacao v Grenada; Haiti v Sint Maarten.
Sep 11: Martinique v British Virgin Is; Saint-Martin v Guadeloupe.
Oct 11: French Guiana v St Vincent & The Grenadines.
Oct 12: Bahamas v Antigua & Barbuda; Bermuda v Sint Maarten; Dominican Republic v Cayman Is; Grenada v Cuba; US Virgin Is v Curacao.
Oct 13: El Salvador v Barbados; St Lucia v Haiti; Surinam v British Virgin Is; Turks & Caicos Is v Guyana.
Oct 14: Bonaire v Jamaica; Montserrat v Belize; Nicaragua v Anguilla; Saint-Martin v St Kitts & Nevis.
Oct 15: Puerto Rico v Martinique.
Oct 16: Canada v Dominica; Guadeloupe v Aruba.

● *All fixtures subject to change*

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EDITOR Gavin Hamilton
ASSISTANT EDITOR Nich Hills
DESIGN DIRECTOR Kevin Eason
DESIGN EDITOR Jamie Latchford
DEPUTY DESIGN EDITOR Daniel Franklin
PICTURE EDITOR Duncan Bond

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Peter Neish

EDITORIAL
Pinehurst 2, Pinehurst Road, Farnborough Business Park, Farnborough, Hants GU14 7BF
Email: world_soccer@ti-media.com
General enquries: +44 (0) 1252 555213

ADVERTISING AND SPONSORSHIP
Matthew Johnston
Tel: +44 (0) 1252 555367
Email: matthew.johnston@ti-media.com

PRODUCTION MANAGER Nigel Davies
PUBLISHING DIRECTOR Gareth Beesley
GROUP MANAGING DIRECTOR Andrea Davies

International licensing enquiries
+44 (0) 20 314 85490
Email: bianca.hamilton-foster@ti-media.com

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WORLD SOCCER SUBSCRIPTIONS
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PREMIER LEAGUE 2018-19

ARSENAL

GOALKEEPERS
1 Petr **CECH** (CzR) (36) 20.05.82
19 Bernd **LENO** (Ger) (26) 04.03.92
26 Emiliano **MARTINEZ** (Arg) (26) 02.09.92

DEFENDERS
2 Hector **BELLERIN** (Spa) (23) 19.03.95
16 Rob **HOLDING** (22) 20.09.95
25 Carl **JENKINSON** (26) 08.02.92
31 Sead **KOLASINAC** (Bos) (25) 20.06.93
6 Laurent **KOSCIELNY** (Fra) (32) 10.09.85
12 Stephan **LICHTSTEINER** (Swi) (34) 16.01.84
27 Konstantinos **MAVROPANOS** (Gre) (20) 11.12.97
18 Nacho **MONREAL** (Spa) (32) 26.02.86
20 Shkodran **MUSTAFI** (Ger) (26) 17.04.92
5 Sokratis **PAPASTATHOPOULOS** (Gre) (30) 09.06.88

MIDFIELDERS
4 Mohamed **ELNENY** (Egy) (26) 11.07.92
29 Matteo **GUENDOUZI** (Fra) (19) 14.04.99
15 Ainsley **MAITLAND-NILES** (21) 29.08.97
7 Henrikh **MKHITARYAN** (Arm) (29) 21.01.89
10 Mesut **OZIL** (Ger) (29) 15.10.88
8 Aaron **RAMSEY** (Wal) (27) 26.12.90
11 Lucas **TORREIRA** (Uru) (22) 11.02.96
34 Granit **XHAKA** (Swi) (25) 27.09.92

FORWARDS
14 Pierre-Emerick **AUBAMEYANG** (Gab) (29) 18.06.89
17 Alex **IWOBI** (Nga) (22) 03.05.96
9 Alexandre **LACAZETTE** (Fra) (27) 28.05.91
23 Danny **WELBECK** (27) 26.11.90

MANAGER
Unai **EMERY** (Spa) (46) 03.11.71

BOURNEMOUTH

GOALKEEPERS
27 Asmir **BEGOVIC** (Bos) (31) 20.06.87
1 Artur **BORUC** (Pol) (38) 20.02.80
12 Aaron **RAMSDALE** (20) 14.05.98

DEFENDERS
5 Nathan **AKE** (Hol) (23) 18.02.95
3 Steve **COOK** (27) 19.04.91
11 Charlie **DANIELS** (32) 07.09.86
2 Simon **FRANCIS** (33) 16.02.85
26 Tyrone **MINGS** (26) 27.02.92
21 Diego **RICO** (Spa) (25) 23.02.93
25 Jack **SIMPSON** (21) 08.01.97
15 Adam **SMITH** (27) 29.04.91

MIDFIELDERS
20 David **BROOKS** (Wal) (21) 08.07.97
16 Lewis **COOK** (21) 03.02.97
24 Ryan **FRASER** (Sco) (24) 24.02.94
4 Dan **GOSLING** (28) 01.02.90
10 Jordon **IBE** (22) 08.12.95
8 Jefferson **LERMA** (Col) (23) 25.10.94
7 Marc **PUGH** (31) 02.04.87
19 Junior **STANISLAS** (28) 26.11.89
6 Andrew **SURMAN** (32) 20.08.86
28 Kyle **TAYLOR** (19) 28.08.99

FORWARDS
18 Jermain **DEFOE** (35) 07.10.82
17 Joshua **KING** (Nor) (26) 15.01.92
9 Lys **MOUSSET** (Fra) (22) 08.02.96
13 Callum **WILSON** (26) 27.02.92

MANAGER
Eddie **HOWE** (40) 29.11.77

BRIGHTON & HA

GOALKEEPERS
27 David **BUTTON** (29) 27.02.89
1 Mat **RYAN** (Aus) (26) 08.04.92
23 Jason **STEELE** (28) 18.08.90

DEFENDERS
14 Leon **BALOGUN** (Nga) (30) 28.06.88
30 **BERNARDO** (Bra) (23) 14.05.95
3 Gaetan **BONG** (Cam) (30) 25.04.88
2 **BRUNO** (Spa) (37) 01.10.80
4 Shane **DUFFY** (Rol) (26) 01.01.92
5 Lewis **DUNK** (26) 21.11.91
22 Martin **MONTOYA** (Spa) (27) 14.04.91
21 Ezequiel **SCHELOTTO** (Ita) (29) 23.05.89
29 Markus **SUTTNER** (Aut) (31) 16.04.87

MIDFIELDERS
8 Yves **BISSOUMA** (Mli) (22) 30.08.96
13 Pascal **GROSS** (Ger) (27) 15.06.91
7 Beram **KAYAL** (Isr) (30) 02.05.88
11 Anthony **KNOCKAERT** (Fra) (26) 20.11.91
20 Solly **MARCH** (24) 20.07.94
24 Davy **PROPPER** (Hol) (27) 02.09.91
6 Dale **STEPHENS** (29) 12.06.89

FORWARDS
10 Florin **ANDONE** (Rom) (25) 11.04.93
19 Jose **IZQUIERDO** (Col) (26) 07.07.92
16 Alireza **JAHANBAKHSH** (Irn) (25) 11.08.93
9 Jurgen **LOCADIA** (Hol) (24) 07.11.93
17 Glenn **MURRAY** (34) 25.09.83
36 Richie **TOWELL** (Rol) (27) 17.07.91

MANAGER
Chris **HUGHTON** (59) 11.12.58

BURNLEY

GOALKEEPERS
20 Joe **HART** (31) 19.04.87
1 Tom **HEATON** (32) 15.04.86
30 Adam **LEGZDINS** (31) 28.11.86
22 Anders **LINDEGAARD** (Den) (34) 13.04.84
29 Nick **POPE** (26) 19.04.92

DEFENDERS
26 Phil **BARDSLEY** (Sco) (33) 28.06.85
14 Ben **GIBSON** (25) 15.01.93
28 Kevin **LONG** (Rol) (28) 18.08.90
2 Matthew **LOWTON** (29) 09.06.89
6 Ben **MEE** (28) 21.09.89
5 James **TARKOWSKI** (25) 19.11.92
3 Charlie **TAYLOR** (24) 18.09.93
23 Stephen **WARD** (Rol) (33) 20.08.85

MIDFIELDERS
12 Robbie **BRADY** (Rol) (26) 14.01.92
4 Jack **CORK** (29) 25.06.89
16 Steven **DEFOUR** (Blg) (30) 15.04.88
7 Johann Berg **GUDMUNDSSON** (Ice) (27) 27.10.90
13 Jeff **HENDRICK** (Rol) (26) 31.01.92
25 Aaron **LENNON** (31) 16.04.87
18 Ashley **WESTWOOD** (28) 01.04.90

FORWARDS
32 Dan **AGYEI** (21) 01.06.97
10 Ashley **BARNES** (Aut) (28) 30.10.89
9 Sam **VOKES** (Wal) (28) 21.10.89
27 Matej **VYDRA** (CzR) (26) 01.05.92
11 Chris **WOOD** (NZ) (26) 07.12.91

MANAGER
Sean **DYCHE** (47) 28.06.71

CARDIFF CITY (Wal)

GOALKEEPERS
1 Neil **ETHERIDGE** (Phi) (28) 07.02.90
31 Chris **KONOPKA** (USA) (33) 14.04.85
28 Brian **MURPHY** (Rol) (35) 07.05.83
12 Alex **SMITHIES** (28) 05.03.90

DEFENDERS
22 Sol **BAMBA** (IvC) (33) 13.01.85
3 Joe **BENNETT** (28) 28.03.90
16 Matthew **CONNOLLY** (30) 24.09.87
34 Cameron **COXE** (Wal) (19) 18.12.98
18 Greg **CUNNINGHAM** (Rol) (27) 31.01.91
5 Bruno **ECUELE MANGA** (Gab) (30) 16.07.88
4 Sean **MORRISON** (27) 08.01.91
13 Callum **PATERSON** (Sco) (23) 13.10.94
2 Lee **PELTIER** (31) 11.12.86
6 Jazz **RICHARDS** (Wal) (27) 12.04.91

MIDFIELDERS
7 Harry **ARTER** (Rol) (28) 28.12.89
21 Victor **CAMARASA** (Spa) (24) 28.05.94
20 Loic **DAMOUR** (Fra) (27) 08.01.91
17 Aron **GUNNARSSON** (Ice) (29) 22.04.89
33 Junior **HOILETT** (Can) (28) 05.06.90
11 Josh **MURPHY** (23) 24.02.95
8 Joe **RALLS** (24) 13.10.93

FORWARDS
24 Gary **MADINE** (28) 24.08.90
27 Ibrahim **MEITE** (22) 01.06.96
19 Nathaniel **MENDEZ-LAING** (26) 15.04.92
14 Bobby **REID** (25) 02.02.93
9 Danny **WARD** (26) 11.12.91
10 Kenneth **ZOHORE** (Den) (24) 31.01.94

MANAGER
Neil **WARNOCK** (69) 01.12.48

CHELSEA

GOALKEEPERS
1 Kepa **ARRIZABALAGA** (Spa) (23) 03.10.94
13 Willy **CABALLERO** (Arg) (36) 28.09.81
31 Rob **GREEN** (38) 18.01.80

DEFENDERS
3 Marcos **ALONSO** (Spa) (27) 28.12.90
28 Cesar **AZPILICUETA** (Spa) (29) 28.08.89
24 Gary **CAHILL** (32) 19.12.85
27 Andreas **CHRISTENSEN** (Den) (22) 10.04.96
30 **DAVID LUIZ** (Bra) (31) 22.04.87
33 **EMERSON** (Ita) (24) 03.08.94
15 Victor **MOSES** (Nga) (27) 12.12.90
2 Antonio **RUDIGER** (Ger) (25) 03.03.93
21 Davide **ZAPPACOSTA** (Ita) (26) 11.06.92

MIDFIELDERS
44 Ethan **AMPADU** (Wal) (17) 14.09.00
8 Ross **BARKLEY** (24) 05.12.93
6 Danny **DRINKWATER** (28) 05.03.90
4 Cesc **FABREGAS** (Spa) (31) 04.05.87
10 Eden **HAZARD** (Blg) (27) 07.01.91
20 Callum **HUDSON-ODOI** (17) 07.11.00
5 **JORGINHO** (Ita) (26) 20.12.91
7 N'Golo **KANTE** (Fra) (27) 29.03.91
17 Mateo **KOVACIC** (Cro) (24) 06.05.94
12 Ruben **LOFTUS-CHEEK** (22) 23.01.96
11 **PEDRO** (Spa) (31) 28.07.87
22 **WILLIAN** (Bra) (30) 09.08.88

FORWARDS
19 Tammy **ABRAHAM** (20) 02.10.97
18 Olivier **GIROUD** (Fra) (31) 30.09.86
29 Alvaro **MORATA** (Spa) (25) 23.10.92

MANAGER
Maurizio **SARRI** (Ita) (59) 10.01.59

CRYSTAL PALACE

GOALKEEPERS
31 Vicente **GUAITA** (Spa) (31) 10.01.87
13 Wayne **HENNESSEY** (Wal) (31) 24.01.87
1 Julian **SPERONI** (Arg) (39) 18.05.79

DEFENDERS
6 Scott **DANN** (31) 14.02.87
34 Martin **KELLY** (28) 27.04.90
12 Mamadou **SAKHO** (Fra) (28) 13.02.90
15 Jeffrey **SCHLUPP** (Gha) (25) 23.12.92
23 Pape **SOUARE** (Sen) (28) 06.06.90
5 James **TOMKINS** (29) 29.03.89
3 Patrick **VAN AANHOLT** (Hol) (28) 29.08.90
29 Aaron **WAN-BISSAKA** (20) 26.11.97
2 Joel **WARD** (28) 29.10.89

MIDFIELDERS
25 Sullay **KAIKAI** (23) 26.08.95
8 Cheikhou **KOUYATE** (Sen) (28) 21.12.89
18 James **McARTHUR** (Sco) (30) 07.10.87
7 Max **MEYER** (Ger) (22) 18.09.95
4 Luka **MILIVOJEVIC** (Ser) (27) 07.04.91
42 Jason **PUNCHEON** (32) 26.06.86
44 Jairo **RIEDEWALD** (Hol) (21) 09.09.96
10 Andros **TOWNSEND** (27) 16.07.91
20 Jonny **WILLIAMS** (Wal) (24) 09.10.93

FORWARDS
14 Jordan **AYEW** (Gha) (26) 11.09.91
17 Christian **BENTEKE** (Blg) (27) 03.12.90
9 Alexander **SORLOTH** (Nor) (22) 05.12.95
21 Connor **WICKHAM** (25) 31.03.93
11 Wilfried **ZAHA** (25) 10.11.92

MANAGER
Roy **HODGSON** (71) 09.08.47

EVERTON

GOALKEEPERS
41 Mateusz **HEWELT** (Pol) (21) 23.09.96
1 Jordan **PICKFORD** (24) 07.03.94
22 Maarten **STEKELENBURG** (Hol) (35) 22.09.82

DEFENDERS
3 Leighton **BAINES** (33) 11.12.84
23 Seamus **COLEMAN** (Rol) (29) 11.10.88
12 Lucas **DIGNE** (Fra) (25) 20.07.93
2 Mason **HOLGATE** (21) 22.10.96
6 Phil **JAGIELKA** (36) 17.08.82
4 Michael **KEANE** (25) 11.01.93
43 Jonjoe **KENNY** (21) 15.03.97
13 Yerry **MINA** (Col) (23) 23.09.94
38 Matthew **PENNINGTON** (23) 06.10.94
5 Kurt **ZOUMA** (Fra) (23) 27.10.94

MIDFIELDERS
34 Beni **BANINGIME** (DRC) (19) 09.09.98
26 Tom **DAVIES** (20) 30.06.98
28 Kieran **DOWELL** (20) 10.10.97
8 Andre **GOMES** (Por) (25) 30.07.93
17 Idrissa **GUEYE** (Sen) (28) 26.09.89
16 James **McCARTHY** (Rol) (27) 12.11.90
18 Morgan **SCHNEIDERLIN** (Fra) (28) 08.11.89
18 Gylfi **SIGURDSSON** (Ice) (28) 08.09.89

FORWARDS
20 **BERNARD** (Bra) (25) 08.09.92
29 Dominic **CALVERT-LEWIN** (21) 16.03.97
31 Ademola **LOOKMAN** (20) 20.10.97
19 Oumar **NIASSE** (Sen) (28) 18.04.90
30 **RICHARLISON** (Bra) (21) 10.05.97
14 Cenk **TOSUN** (Tur) (27) 07.06.91
11 Theo **WALCOTT** (29) 16.03.89

MANAGER
Marco **SILVA** (Por) (41) 12.07.77

FULHAM

GOALKEEPERS
1 Marcus **BETTINELLI** (26) 24.05.92
31 **FABRI** (Spa) (30) 31.12.87
25 Sergio **RICO** (Spa) (25) 01.09.93

DEFENDERS
23 Joe **BRYAN** (24) 17.09.93
5 Calum **CHAMBERS** (23) 20.01.95
22 Cyrus **CHRISTIE** (Rol) (25) 30.09.92
21 Timothy **FOSU-MENSAH** (Hol) (20) 02.01.98
20 Maxime **LE MARCHAND** (Fra) (28) 11.10.89
26 Alfie **MAWSON** (24) 19.01.94
4 Denis **ODOI** (Blg) (30) 27.05.88
13 Tim **REAM** (USA) (30) 05.10.87

MIDFIELDERS
10 Tom **CAIRNEY** (Sco) (27) 20.01.91
44 Ibrahima **CISSE** (Blg) (24) 28.02.94
8 Stefan **JOHANSEN** (Nor) (27) 08.01.91
7 Neeskens **KEBANO** (DRC) (26) 10.03.92
6 Kevin **McDONALD** (Sco) (29) 04.11.88
24 Jean Michael **SERI** (IvC) (27) 19.07.91
3 Ryan **SESSEGNON** (18) 18.05.00
29 Andre-Frank **ZAMBO ANGUISSA** (22) 16.11.95

FORWARDS
11 Floyd **AYITE** (Tog) (29) 15.12.88
17 Rui **FONTE** (Por) (28) 23.04.90
47 Aboubakar **KAMARA** (Fra) (23) 07.03.95
9 Aleksandar **MITROVIC** (Ser) (23) 16.09.94
14 Andre **SCHURRLE** (Ger) (27) 06.11.90
19 Luciano **VIETTO** (Arg) (23) 05.12.94

MANAGER
Slavisa **JOKANOVIC** (Ser) (50) 16.08.68

HUDDERSFIELD T

GOALKEEPERS
12 Ben **HAMER** (30) 20.11.87
1 Jonas **LOSSL** (Den) (29) 01.02.89
31 Ryan **SCHOFIELD** (18) 11.12.99

DEFENDERS
37 Erik **DURM** (Ger) (26) 12.05.92
33 Florent **HADERGJONAJ** (Swi) (24) 31.07.94
25 Mathias **JORGENSEN** (Den) (28) 23.04.90
5 Terence **KONGOLO** (Hol) (24) 14.02.94
15 Chris **LOWE** (Ger) (29) 16.04.89
26 Christopher **SCHINDLER** (Ger) (28) 29.04.90
2 Tommy **SMITH** (26) 14.04.92
27 Jon Gorenc **STANKOVIC** (Sln) (22) 14.01.96

MIDFIELDERS
7 Juninho **BACUNA** (Hol) (21) 07.08.97
8 Philip **BILLING** (Den) (22) 11.06.96
11 Adama **DIAKHABY** (Fra) (22) 05.07.96
6 Jonathan **HOGG** (29) 06.12.88
10 Aaron **MOOY** (Aus) (27) 15.09.90
21 Alex **PRITCHARD** (25) 03.05.93
29 Abdelhamid **SABIRI** (Mor) (21) 28.11.96
14 Ramadan **SOBHI** (Egy) (21) 23.01.97
17 Rajiv **VAN LA PARRA** (Hol) (27) 04.06.91
19 Danny **WILLIAMS** (USA) (29) 08.03.89

FORWARDS
20 Laurent **DEPOITRE** (Blg) (29) 07.12.88
9 Elias **KACHUNGA** (DRC) (26) 22.04.92
18 Isaac **MBENZA** (Blg) (22) 08.03.96
24 Steve **MOUNIE** (Ben) (23) 29.09.94
23 Collin **QUANER** (Ger) (27) 18.06.91

MANAGER
David **WAGNER** (Ger) (46) 19.10.71

LEICESTER CITY

GOALKEEPERS

17 Eldin **JAKUPOVIC** (Swi) (33) 02.10.84
1 Kasper **SCHMEICHEL** (Den) (31) 05.11.86
12 Danny **WARD** (Wal) (25) 22.06.93

DEFENDERS

29 Yohan **BENALOUANE** (Tun) (31) 28.03.87
16 Filip **BENKOVIC** (Cro) (21) 13.07.97
3 Ben **CHILWELL** (21) 21.12.96
35 Callum **ELDER** (Aus) (23) 23.01.95
6 Johnny **EVANS** (NI) (30) 03.01.88
28 Christian **FUCHS** (Aut) (32) 07.04.86
15 Harry **MAGUIRE** (25) 05.03.93
5 Wes **MORGAN** (Jam) (34) 21.01.84
14 Ricardo **PEREIRA** (Por) (24) 06.10.93
2 Danny **SIMPSON** (31) 04.01.87
4 Caglar **SOYUNCU** (Tur) (22) 23.05.96

MIDFIELDERS

11 Marc **ALBRIGHTON** (28) 18.11.89
18 Daniel **AMARTEY** (Gha) (23) 21.12.94
38 Hamza **CHOUDHURY** (20) 01.10.97
31 Rachid **GHEZZAL** (Alg) (26) 09.05.92
7 Demarai **GRAY** (22) 28.06.96
21 Vicente **IBORRA** (Spa) (30) 16.01.88
22 Matty **JAMES** (27) 22.07.91
33 Bartosz **KAPUSTKA** (Pol) (21) 23.12.96
37 Andy **KING** (Wal) (29) 29.10.88
10 James **MADDISON** (21) 23.11.96
24 Nampalys **MENDY** (Fra) (26) 23.06.92
25 Wilfred **NDIDI** (Nga) (21) 16.12.96
14 Adrien **SILVA** (Por) (29) 15.03.89

FORWARDS

27 Fousseni **DIABATE** (Mli) (22) 18.10.95
8 Kelechi **IHEANACHO** (Nga) (21) 03.10.96
20 Shinji **OKAZAKI** (Jap) (32) 16.04.86
9 Jamie **VARDY** (31) 11.01.87

MANAGER

Claude **PUEL** (Fra) (57) 02.09.61

LIVERPOOL

GOALKEEPERS

13 **ALISSON** (Bra) (25) 02.10.92
22 Simon **MIGNOLET** (Blg) (30) 06.03.88

DEFENDERS

66 Trent **ALEXANDER-ARNOLD** (19) 07.10.98
2 Nathaniel **CLYNE** (27) 05.04.91
3 **FABINHO** (Bra) (24) 23.10.93
12 Joe **GOMEZ** (21) 23.05.97
6 Dejan **LOVREN** (Cro) (29) 05.07.89
32 Joel **MATIP** (Cam (27) 08.08.91
18 Alberto **MORENO** (Spa) (26) 05.07.92
26 Andrew **ROBERTSON** (Sco) (24) 11.03.94
4 Virgil **VAN DIJK** (Hol) (27) 08.07.91

MIDFIELDERS

14 Jordan **HENDERSON** (28) 17.06.90
8 Naby **KEITA** (Gui) (23) 10.02.95
20 Adam **LALLANA** (30) 10.05.88
7 James **MILNER** (32) 04.01.86
21 Alex **OXLADE-CHAMBERLAIN** (25) 15.08.93
5 Georginio **WIJNALDUM** (Hol) (27) 11.11.90

FORWARDS

24 Rhian **BREWSTER** (18) 01.04.00
9 Roberto **FIRMINO** (Bra) (26) 02.10.91
10 Sadio **MANE** (Sen) (26) 10.04.92
27 Divock **ORIGI** (Blg) (23) 18.04.95
11 Mohamed **SALAH** (Egy) (26) 15.06.92
23 Xherdan **SHAQIRI** (Swi) (26) 10.10.91
29 Dominic **SOLANKE** (20) 14.09.97
15 Daniel **STURRIDGE** (29) 01.09.89

MANAGER

Jurgen **KLOPP** (Ger) (51) 16.06.67

MANCHESTER CITY

GOALKEEPERS

1 Claudio **BRAVO** (Chl) (35) 13.04.83
31 **EDERSON** (Bra) (25) 17.08.93
32 Daniel **GRIMSHAW** (20) 16.01.98
49 Aro **MURIC** (Mne) (19) 07.11.98

DEFENDERS

3 **DANILO** (Bra) (27) 15.07.91
4 Vincent **KOMPANY** (Blg) (32) 10.04.86
14 Aymeric **LAPORTE** (Fra) (24) 27.05.94
15 Eliaquim **MANGALA** (Fra) (27) 13.02.91
22 Benjamin **MENDY** (Fra) (24) 17.07.94
30 Nicolas **OTAMENDI** (Arg) (30) 12.02.88
5 John **STONES** (24) 28.05.94
2 Kyle **WALKER** (28) 28.05.90

MIDFIELDERS

17 Kevin **DE BRUYNE** (Blg) (27) 28.06.91
18 Fabian **DELPH** (28) 21.11.89
55 Brahim **DIAZ** (Spa) (19) 03.08.99
25 **FERNANDINHO** (Bra) (33) 04.05.85
47 Phil **FODEN** (18) 28.05.00
8 Ilkay **GUNDOGAN** (Ger) (27) 24.10.90
26 Riyad **MAHREZ** (Alg) (27) 21.02.91
20 Bernardo **SILVA** (Por) (24) 10.08.94
21 David **SILVA** (Spa) (32) 08.01.86
35 Oleksandr **ZINCHENKO** (Ukr) (21) 15.12.96

FORWARDS

10 Sergio **AGUERO** (Arg) (30) 02.06.88
33 Gabriel **JESUS** (Bra) (21) 03.04.97
19 Leroy **SANE** (Ger) (22) 11.01.96
7 Raheem **STERLING** (23) 08.12.94

MANAGER

Pep **GUARDIOLA** (Spa) (47) 18.01.71

MANCHESTER UTD

GOALKEEPERS

1 David **DE GEA** (Spa) (27) 07.11.90
13 Lee **GRANT** (35) 27.01.83
22 Sergio **ROMERO** (Arg) (31) 22.02.87

DEFENDERS

3 Eric **BAILLY** (IvC) (24) 12.04.94
20 Diogo **DALOT** (Por) (19) 18.03.99
36 Matteo **DARMIAN** (Ita) (28) 02.12.89
4 Phil **JONES** (26) 21.02.92
2 Victor **LINDELOF** (Swe) (24) 17.07.94
16 Marcos **ROJO** (Arg) (28) 20.03.90
23 Luke **SHAW** (23) 12.07.95
12 Chris **SMALLING** (28) 22.11.89
25 Antonio **VALENCIA** (Ecu) (33) 04.08.85

MIDFIELDERS

27 Marouane **FELLAINI** (Blg) (30) 22.11.87
17 **FRED** (Bra) (25) 05.03.93
21 Ander **HERRERA** (Spa) (29) 14.08.89
14 Jesse **LINGARD** (25) 15.12.92
8 Juan **MATA** (Spa) (30) 28.04.88
31 Nemanja **MATIC** (Ser) (30) 01.08.88
39 Scott **McTOMINAY** (Sco) (21) 08.12.96
15 Anders **PEREIRA** (Bra) (22) 01.01.96
6 Paul **POGBA** (Fra) (25) 15.03.93
18 Ashley **YOUNG** (33) 09.07.85

FORWARDS

9 Romelu **LUKAKU** (Blg) (25) 13.05.93
11 Anthony **MARTIAL** (Fra) (22) 05.12.95
10 Marcus **RASHFORD** (20) 31.10.97
7 Alexis **SANCHEZ** (Chl) (29) 19.12.88

MANAGER

Jose **MOURINHO** (Por) (55) 26.01.63

NEWCASTLE UTD

GOALKEEPERS

26 Karl **DARLOW** (27) 08.10.90
12 Martin **DUBRAVKA** (Slk) (29) 15.01.89
1 Rob **ELLIOT** (Rol) (32) 30.04.86
41 Freddie **WOODMAN** (21) 04.03.97

DEFENDERS

2 Ciaran **CLARK** (Rol) (28) 26.09.89
3 Paul **DUMMETT** (Wal) (26) 26.09.91
18 Federico **FERNANDEZ** (Arg) (29) 21.02.89
6 Jamaal **LASCELLES** (24) 11.11.93
20 Florian **LEJEUNE** (Fra) (27) 20.05.91
19 Javier **MANQUILLO** (Spa) (24) 05.05.94
5 Fabian **SCHAR** (Swi) (26) 20.12.91
25 Jamie **STERRY** (22) 21.11.95
22 DeAndre **YEDLIN** (USA) (25) 09.07.93

MIDFIELDERS

30 Christian **ATSU** (Gha) (26) 10.01.92
10 Mohamed **DIAME** (Sen) (31) 14.06.87
14 Isaac **HAYDEN** (23) 22.03.95
15 **KENEDY** (Bra) (22) 08.02.96
4 **KI** Sung-yeung (SKo) (29) 24.01.89
36 Sean **LONGSTAFF** (20) 30.10.97
7 Jacob **MURPHY** (23) 24.02.95
11 Matt **RITCHIE** (Sco) (28) 10.09.89
37 Cal **ROBERTS** (21) 14.04.97
8 Jonjo **SHELVEY** (26) 27.02.92

FORWARDS

21 **JOSELU** (Spa) (28) 27.03.90
13 Yoshinori **MUTO** (Jap) (26) 15.07.92
17 Ayoze **PEREZ** (Spa) (24) 29.07.93
9 Salomon **RONDON** (Ven) (28) 16.09.89

MANAGER

Rafael **BENITEZ** (Spa) (58) 16.04.60

SOUTHAMPTON

GOALKEEPERS

44 Fraser **FORSTER** (30) 17.03.88
28 Angus **GUNN** (22) 22.01.96
1 Alex **McCARTHY** (28) 03.12.89

DEFENDERS

35 Jan **BEDNAREK** (Pol) (22) 12.04.96
21 Ryan **BERTRAND** (29) 05.08.89
6 Wesley **HOEDT** (Hol) (24) 06.03.94
2 Cedric **SOARES** (Por) (27) 31.08.91
5 Jack **STEPHENS** (24) 27.01.94
33 Matt **TARGETT** (22) 18.09.95
4 Jannik **VESTERGAARD** (Den) (26) 03.08.92
3 Maya **YOSHIDA** (Jap) (30) 24.08.88

MIDFIELDERS

17 Stuart **ARMSTRONG** (Sco) (26) 30.03.92
8 Steven **DAVIS** (NI) (33) 01.01.85
11 Mohamed **ELYOUNOUSSI** (Nor) (24) 04.08.94
23 Pierre-Emile **HOJBJERG** (Den) (23) 05.08.95
18 Mario **LEMINA** (Gab) (25) 01.09.93
22 Nathan **REDMOND** (24) 06.03.94
14 Oriol **ROMEU** (Spa) (26) 24.09.91
16 James **WARD-PROWSE** (23) 01.11.94

FORWARDS

10 Charlie **AUSTIN** (29) 05.07.89
20 Manolo **GABBIADINI** (Ita) (26) 26.11.91
15 Sam **GALLAGHER** (22) 15.09.95
9 Danny **INGS** (26) 23.07.92
7 Shane **LONG** (Rol) (31) 22.01.87

MANAGER

Mark **HUGHES** (Wal) (54) 01.11.63

TOTTENHAM H

GOALKEEPERS

1 Hugo **LLORIS** (Fra) (31) 26.12.86
22 Paulo **GAZZANIGA** (Arg) (26) 02.01.92
13 Michel **VORM** (Hol) (34) 20.10.83

DEFENDERS

4 Toby **ALDERWEIRELD** (Blg) (29) 02.03.89
24 Serge **AURIER** (IvC) (25) 24.12.92
33 Ben **DAVIES** (Wal) (25) 24.04.93
21 Juan **FOYTH** (Arg) (20) 12.01.98
3 Danny **ROSE** (28) 02.07.90
6 Davinson **SANCHEZ** (Col) (22) 12.06.96
2 Keiran **TRIPPIER** (27) 19.09.90
5 Jan **VERTONGHEN** (Blg) (31) 24.04.87
16 Kyle **WALKER-PETERS** (21) 13.04.97

MIDFIELDERS

20 Dele **ALLI** (22) 11.04.96
40 Luke **AMOS** (21) 23.02.97
19 Mousa **DEMBELE** (Blg) (31) 16.07.87
15 Eric **DIER** (24) 15.01.94
23 Christian **ERIKSEN** (Den) (26) 14.02.92
42 Anthony **GEORGIOU** (Cyp) (21) 24.02.97
11 Erik **LAMELA** (Arg) (26) 04.03.92
27 Lucas **MOURA** I(Bra) (26) 13.08.92
14 Georges-Kevin **N'KOUDOU** (Fra) (23) 13.02.95
46 Tashan **OAKLEY-BOOTHE** (18) 14.02.00
25 Josh **ONOMAH** (21) 27.04.97
17 Moussa **SISSOKO** (Fra) (29) 16.08.89
12 Victor **WANYAMA** (Ken) (27) 25.06.91
8 Harry **WINKS** (22) 02.02.96

FORWARDS

9 Vincent **JANSSEN** (Hol) (24) 15.06.94
10 Harry **KANE** (25) 28.07.93
18 Fernando **LLORENTE** (Spa) (33) 26.02.85
7 **SON** Heung-min (SKo) (26) 08.07.92

MANAGER

Mauricio **POCHETTINO** (Arg) (46) 02.03.72

WATFORD

GOALKEEPERS

30 Pontus **DAHLBERG** (Swe) (19) 21.01.99
26 Ben **FOSTER** (35) 03.04.83
1 Heurelho **GOMES** (Bra) (37) 15.02.81

DEFENDERS

3 Miguel **BRITOS** (Uru) (33) 17.07.85
15 Craig **CATHCART** (NI) (29) 06.02.89
21 Kiko **FEMENIA** (Spa) (27) 02.02.91
25 Jose **HOLEBAS** (Gre) (34) 27.06.84
2 Daryl **JANMAAT** (Hol) (29) 22.07.89
27 Christian **KABASELE** (Blg) (27) 24.02.91
4 Younes **KABOUL** (Fra) (32) 04.01.86
6 Adrian **MARIAPPA** (Jam) (31) 03.10.86
11 Adam **MASINA** (Ita) (24) 02.01.94
23 Marc **NAVARRO** (Spa) (23) 02.07.95
5 Sebastian **PRODL** (Aut) (31) 21.06.87
24 Ben **WILMOT** (18) 04.11.99
22 Marvin **ZEEGELAAR** (Hol) (27) 12.08.90

MIDFIELDERS

29 Etienne **CAPOUE** (Fra) (30) 11.07.88
14 Nathaniel **CHALOBAH** (23) 12.12.94
8 Tom **CLEVERLEY** (28) 12.08.89
16 Abdoulaye **DOUCOURE** (Fra) (25) 01.01.93
19 Will **HUGHES** (23) 17.04.95
37 Roberto **PEREYRA** (Arg) (27) 07.01.91
20 Domingos **QUINA** (Por) (18) 18.11.99
12 Ken **SEMA** (Swe) (24) 30.09.93

FORWARDS

9 Troy **DEENEY** (30) 29.06.88
7 Gerard **DEULOFEU** (Spa) (24) 13.03.94
18 Andre **GRAY** (27) 26.06.91
33 Stefano **OKAKA** (Ita) (28) 09.08.89
17 Adalberto **PENARANDA** (Ven) (21) 31.05.97
10 Isaac **SUCCESS** (Nga) (22) 07.01.96

MANAGER

Javi **GRACIA** (Spa) (48) 01.05.70

WEST HAM UTD

GOALKEEPERS

13 **ADRIAN** (Spa) (31) 03.01.87
1 Lukasz **FABIANSKI** (Pol) (33) 18.04.85

DEFENDERS

4 Fabian **BALBUENA** (Par) (27) 23.08.91
3 Aaron **CRESSWELL** (28) 05.12.89
23 Issa **DIOP** (Fra) (21) 09.01.97
24 Ryan **FREDERICKS** (25) 10.10.92
26 Arthur **MASUAKU** (DRC) (24) 07.11.93
21 Angelo **OGBONNA** (Ita) (30) 23.05.88
35 Reece **OXFORD** (19) 16.12.98
2 Winston **REID** (NZ) (30) 03.07.88
5 Pablo **ZABALETA** (Arg) (33) 16.01.85

MIDFIELDERS

30 Michail **ANTONIO** (28) 28.03.90
8 **FELIPE ANDERSON** (Bra) (25) 15.04.93
37 Nathan **HOLLAND** (20) 19.06.98
10 Manuel **LANZINI** (Arg) (25) 15.02.93
16 Mark **NOBLE** (31) 08.05.87
14 Pedro **OBIANG** (Spa) (26) 27.03.92
39 Josh **PASK** (20) 01.11.97
41 Declan **RICE** (Rol) (19) 14.01.99
15 Carlos **SANCHEZ** (Col) (32) 06.02.86
11 Robert **SNODGRASS** (Sco) (31) 07.09.87
19 Jack **WILSHERE** (26) 01.01.92

FORWARDS

7 Marko **ARNAUTOVIC** (Aut) (29) 19.04.89
9 Andy **CARROLL** (29) 06.01.89
17 Javier **HERNANDEZ** (Mex) (30) 01.06.88
27 Lucas **PEREZ** (Spa) (29) 10.09.88
20 Andriy **YARMOLENKO** (Ukr) (28) 23.10.89

MANAGER

Manuel **PELLEGRINI** (Chl) (64) 16.09.53

WOLVES

GOALKEEPERS

31 Will **NORRIS** (25) 12.08.93
11 Rui **PATRICIO** (Por) (30) 15.02.88
21 John **RUDDY** (31) 24.10.86

DEFENDERS

6 Danny **BATTH** (27) 21.09.90
5 Ryan **BENNETT** (28) 06.03.90
15 Willy **BOLY** (Fra) (27) 03.02.91
19 Jonny **CASTRO** (Spa) (24) 03.03.94
16 Conor **COADY** (25) 25.02.93
2 Matt **DOHERTY** (Rol) (26) 06.01.92
30 Kortney **HAUSE** (23) 16.07.95
29 Ruben **VINAGRE** (Por) (19) 09.04.99

MIDFIELDERS

32 Leander **DENDONCKER** (Blg) (23) 15.04.95
17 Morgan **GIBBS-WHITE** (18) 27.01.00
28 Joao **MOUTINHO** (Por) (32) 08.09.86
8 Ruben **NEVES** (Por) (21) 13.03.97
27 Romain **SAISS** (Mor) (28) 26.03.90

FORWARDS

33 Leo **BONATINI** (Bra) (24) 28.03.94
7 Ivan **CAVALEIRO** (Por) (24) 18.10.93
10 Helder **COSTA** (Por) (24) 12.01.94
14 Bright **ENOBAKHARE** (Nga) (20) 18.05.98
9 Raul **JIMENEZ** (Mex) (27) 05.05.91
18 Diogo **JOTA** (Por) (21) 04.12.96
37 Adama **TRAORE** (Spa) (22) 25.01.96

MANAGER

Nuno Espirito **SANTO** (Por) (44) 25.01.74

(ages as of 07.09.18)

RIVALS

Intense...Anderson of Fluminense gets the better of Flamengo's Wallace

FLAMENGO v FLUMINENSE

Rio de Janeiro's Fla-Flu clash attracts such large crowds that it is known in Brazil as the *Clássico das Multidões* – the derby of the masses

According to the famous Brazilian writer Nelson Rodrigues: "Fla-Flu has no beginning. Fla-Flu has no end. Fla-Flu began 40 minutes before time. And then the masses awoke."

Fluminense were founded in 1902 by the sons of Rio's elite and their cross-town rivals came into being nine years later when most of Flu's first team walked out after a row with the club's board and started a team at Flamengo, which until then was primarily a rowing club.

Since then Flamengo have won the national title five times – to Flu's four – and the Libertadores Cup once, in 1981.

Flamengo are also one of only five Brazilian sides never to have been relegated, while Flu were in Serie C as recently as 1999.

One of the most famous meetings between the pair was in 1941 and came to be known as "*Fla-Flu da Lagoa*" (Fla-Flu of the Lake).

In the decisive match of the Rio state championship, Flamengo had six minutes left in which to score and win the title.

With Fluminense's keeper having broken his collarbone, his team-mates ran the clock down by kicking the ball into a nearby lake at every opportunity, requiring a member of Fla's staff to retrieve the ball by boat.

Those remaining six minutes took over half an hour to complete before the referee finally blew for full time and Flu were crowned champions. WS

Passion...fans of Flamengo

CLASSIC ENCOUNTERS

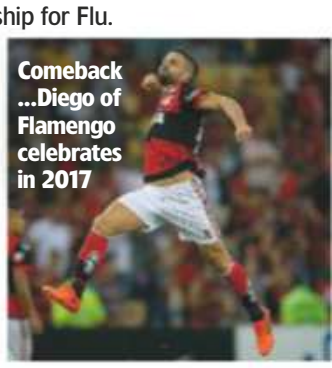
1912 Jul 7
Despite having lost the bulk of their side, Fluminense win the first encounter 3-2 at Laranjeiras stadium.

1963 Dec 15
A world-record crowd of 194,603 at the Maracana witnesses a goalless draw between the pair.

1986 Feb 16
In a remarkable individual display in the state championship, Flamengo win 4-1 with Zico scoring all four goals.

1995 Jun 25
Having come from 2-0 down, Fla are set to be crowned champions at 2-2 in the state-title decider – until Renato Gaucho scores a late winner with his belly to clinch the championship for Flu.

2017 Nov 1
Trailing 3-1 in their home leg at the Maracana, Fla score two second-half goals to draw 3-3 on the night and advance 4-3 on aggregate to the Sudamericana Cup semi-finals.



Comeback ...Diego of Flamengo celebrates in 2017

ON BOTH SIDES

MARIO ZAGALLO
- 1950-58; (as coach) 1972-74, 1984-85, 2000-01
- (as coach) 1971-72

EDINHO
- 1975-82, 1988-89; (as coach) 1991, 1993, 1998
- 1987-88; (as coach) 1994-95

CARLOS ALBERTO
- 1963-66, 1974-76; (as coach) 1994
- 1976-77; (as coach) 1983-85, 2001-02

RENATO GAUCHO
- 1987-88, 1989-90, 1993, 1997-98
- 1995-97; (as a coach) 2002-03, 2007-08, 2009, 2014

ROMARIO
- 1995-96, 1997, 1998-99
- 2002-04

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